Chronicles
June 2006 A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN CULTURE $3.95

Freedom or Tyranny?

The ultimate form of democracy is tyranny.

—Aristotle

PERIODICAL
#BXBFHFJ********AUTO**ALL FOR ADC 941
#94301UZZ555BY003# OCT 08 TURE 5914
RON UNZ S 151 441
555 BRYANT ST # 371
PALO ALTO CA 94301-1704

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

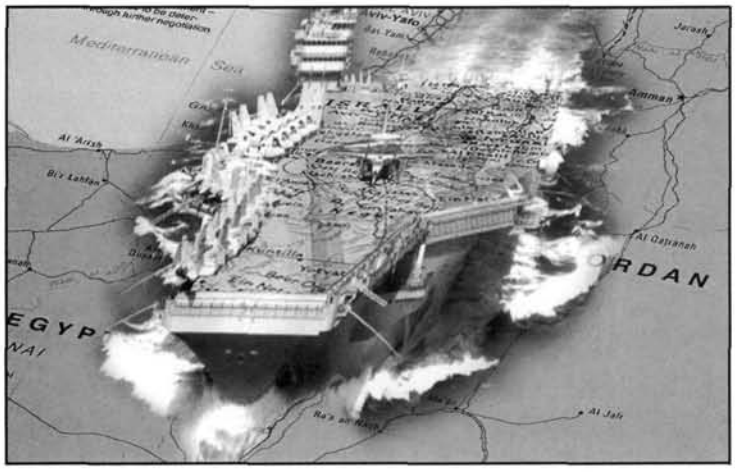
The purpose of this book is to rekindle debate in the United States about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. . . . It is not normal that the discourse on the dispute is far more dynamic, varied, and intelligent in other countries—including Israel—than in America.

—From the Foreword

Peace in the Promised Land: A Realist Scenario

edited by Srdja Trifkovic

featuring chapters by Middle Eastern experts, *Chronicles* editors, and scholars
Thomas Fleming, Michael Stenton, Leon Hadar, Srdja Trifkovic, Aaron D. Wolf, Paul Gottfried, Wayne Allensworth, David A. Hartman, Doug Bandow, Stephen B. Presser, and Ivan Eland, as well as color maps, source documents, and a selected bibliography



Few issues in American foreign policy evoke more emotion than U. S. support for Israel. With the death of Yasser Arafat and a new centrist coalition in Israel, however, it is time to reconsider the question, "What is the American interest in this conflict?"

Peace in the Promised Land is essential reading for anyone who wants to move beyond sound bites and policy proposals to understand the roots of the conflict—and the role that the United States can play in its resolution.

Peace in the Promised Land Order Form (please allow 6 weeks for delivery)

Softcover Price $34.95
($29.95 + $5.00 shipping and handling each)

X Quantity _____

Total _____

Please mail form (with payment) to:
Chronicles/Products
P.O. Box 800, Mount Morris, IL 61054

or, to order toll-free,
call 1-800-397-8160

PEAC

PEAC

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

☐ Check or money order enclosed

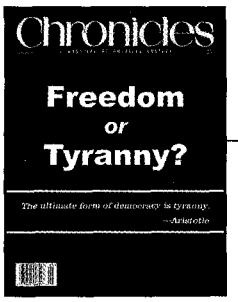
☐ Please bill my: ☐ MasterCard ☐ Visa ☐ Amex ☐ Discover

Card # _____

Expiration Date _____

Signature _____

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



Chronicles
A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN CULTURE

PERSPECTIVE

Imposing Utopia 10
by Thomas Fleming
Concealing despotism.

VIEWS

Cincinnatus, Call the Office! 14
by Clyde Wilson
Public service *versus* the American System.

Judging for the People 16
by Stephen B. Presser
Democracy, the Supreme Court, and the Constitution.

Democracy: The Enlightened Way 19
by Claude Polin
The your-fault society.

REVIEWS

A Government We Deserve 27
by H.A. Scott Trask

Sean Wilentz: *The Rise of Democracy: Jefferson to Lincoln*

Clark Stooksbury on Rod Dreher's *Crunchy Cons* ◆ **Gregory J. Sullivan** on Linda Greenhouse's *Becoming Justice Blackmun: Harry Blackmun's Supreme Court Journey* and Joan Biskupic's *Sandra Day O'Connor: How the First Woman on the Supreme Court Became Its Most Influential Justice* ◆ **Jack Trotter** on William Baldwin's *A Gentleman in Charleston and the Manner of His Death* ◆ **Thomas Fleming** on Peter Heather's *The Fall of the Roman Empire: A New History of Rome and the Barbarians* ◆ 29

CORRESPONDENCE

Letter From Germany: Democratizing Germany: Paving the Way for Hitler by Josef Schüsslburner 36

Letter From Greece: Talking About Conservatism: The Politics of Guilt by Nikos Hidiroglou 37

Letter From New Orleans: Six Months After Katrina 38
by Russell Desmond

VITAL SIGNS

LIFE: **The Courage to Defy Prudence** 43
by Christopher Check

TECHNOLOGY: **The Age of Verification** 44
by Marian Kester Coombs

COLUMNS

THE BARE BODKIN 13
by Joseph Sobran

HERESIES 34
by Aaron D. Wolf

THE ROCKFORD FILES 35
by Scott P. Richert

THE AMERICAN INTEREST 41
by Srdja Trifkovic

IN THE DARK 47
V for Vendetta, Thank You for Smoking
by George McCartney

WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE WORLD 49
by Chilton Williamson, Jr.

DEPARTMENTS

POLEMICS & EXCHANGES 4

AMERICAN PROSCENIUM 6

CULTURAL REVOLUTIONS 8

POETRY
Revival by Peter Dalton 18

ON THE COVER

Cover and inside illustrations by Melanie Anderson. Additional inside illustrations by Elizabeth Wolf and Nicholas Garrie.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

EDITOR
Thomas Fleming

EXECUTIVE EDITOR
Scott P. Richert

SENIOR EDITOR, BOOKS
Chilton Williamson, Jr.

ASSOCIATE EDITOR
Aaron D. Wolf

DESIGNER
Melanie Anderson

INTERIOR ARTIST
George McCartney, Jr.

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS
Katherine Dalton, George Garrett, Tom Landess, Joseph Sobran, James O. Tate, Clyde Wilson

CORRESPONDING EDITORS
Wayne Allensworth, Donald Livingston, Roger D. McGrath, William Mills, William Murchison, Andrei Navrozov, Claude Polin

FILM EDITOR
George McCartney

FOREIGN-AFFAIRS EDITOR
Srdja Trifkovic

LEGAL-AFFAIRS EDITOR
Stephen B. Presser

RELIGION EDITOR
Harold O.J. Brown

CIRCULATION MANAGER
Cindy Link

PUBLISHER
The Rockford Institute

A publication of The Rockford Institute.
Editorial and Advertising Offices:
928 North Main Street, Rockford, IL 61103.
Website: *www.chroniclesmagazine.org*
Editorial Phone: (815) 964-5054.
Advertising Phone: (815) 964-5813.
Subscription Department: P.O. Box 800,
Mount Morris, IL 61054. Call 1-800-877-5459.

Copyright © 2006 by The Rockford Institute.
All rights reserved.

Chronicles: A Magazine of American Culture (ISSN 0887-5731) is published monthly for $39.99 (foreign subscriptions add $12 for surface delivery, $48 for Air Mail) per year by The Rockford Institute, 928 North Main Street, Rockford, IL 61103-7061. Preferred periodical postage paid at Rockford, IL and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Chronicles, P.O. Box 800, Mount Morris, IL 61054.

The views expressed in *Chronicles* are the authors' alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Rockford Institute or of its directors. Unsolicited manuscripts cannot be returned unless accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope.

Chronicles
A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN CULTURE
Vol. 30, No. 6 June 2006
Printed in the United States of America

POLEMICS & EXCHANGES

On the Death of Marxism

In his review of my book, *The Strange Death of Marxism* ("The Two Faces of Marxism," April), Paul Belien writes that I have overstated the hypothetical distance between Marxism and post-Marxism. The "cultural Marxists" in the Frankfurt School were supposedly right to claim for themselves a Marxist pedigree because of their hatred for Christian and bourgeois traditions and because, as Belien explains, the early Soviet communists had no use for either the institution of marriage or established sex distinctions.

These observations are partly correct, but let us also remember that Soviet Russia and other communist societies, after an initial fling with yuppie ideas, settled down to relatively conventional social standards, when measured against current Western European ones. Communist countries, for example, have been extremely inhospitable to homosexuals, lesbians, and druggies. This attitude was, of course, not characteristic of the intellectuals who joined Western communist parties and, like Michele Foucault, helped create the current leftist culture. Nor does my criterion apply to those tiresome Germans who supported the DDR out of collective self-loathing—that is, because they supported Germany's division and the oppression of the East Germans as a condign punishment for their people. In my usage, Marxism was the way that Marxist ideology took form in Eastern European countries and the dialectical-materialist conception of history that originated with Marx and Lenin. I find it hard to talk about a Marxism that is not grounded in a specific economic collectivist blueprint, although I do agree with Belien that Western social-democratic regimes were the necessary precondition for the present leftist political culture.

I would also question whether the "decadent, hedonistic, post-Marxist left" has taken root mostly because of the "disappearance of Christianity." It represents, among other things, the transformation of the Christian doctrine of Original Sin into social and cultural guilt. While the left, with the help of Christian clergy, has distorted this foundational Christian teaching, European Christianity has not left a "vacuum." And post-Marxism rejects other aspects of European civilization besides its Christian heritage. The left's loathing for normal sex distinctions and nonkinky marriage would have shocked a virtuous pagan as well as a traditional Christian. One reason that I stress that the post-Marxist left is a predominantly Western creation is to indicate that the great battle for civilization in the 20th century did not end with the "defeat of communism." This battle is continuing in the "democratic" West, and Paul Belien deserves respect not only for his fine review but also for the good fight he is waging in his own bureaucratically beleaguered land.

—Paul Gottfried
Elizabethtown, PA

On Fiduciary Duty

In his article in the March issue on property takings ("Does the Federal Government Protect Private Property?" *Views*), Stephen B. Presser exhibits the fuzzy thinking that prevents our side from gaining traction. He equates corporate property with personal property when, in fact, corporate property, like government property, is nearly the opposite of personal property and is certainly its enemy. Large, limited-responsibility (so-called limited-liability) corporate stockholding reduces ownership to an abstract near-nullity.

Worse, it forbids the good use of such ownership. "Fiduciary duty" means *only* the profit motive may be considered, even if holders of a stock majority would prefer to do better. Offshoring, exploitative marketing, law-buying, and ruining of communities—all are required. Witness Carl Karcher, who was forced out of the leadership of Carl's Jr., the company he founded, because he tried to fight this.

Sarbanes-Oxley is nowhere near enough to level the playing field. We need to make full-responsibility ownership (sole proprietorship and partnership) as attractive as corporate stockholding. Then the families, clans, and communities so rightly extolled in the rest of the March issue will have a fair chance to influence the course of our country.

—Lawrence J. Dickson
National City, CA

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Professor Presser Replies:

Mr. Dickson's romantic notion of individual proprietorship has a certain Jeffersonian appeal, but, given the realities of the global economy and governmental impositions of this day and age, it is not likely to be realized completely and certainly not through eliminating limited liability. I simply cannot agree that the rule of limited liability reduces ownership in corporations to a "near-nullity"; instead, it facilitates investment for persons of modest means and increases productivity.

Mr. Dickson seems unaware of the role such limited liability plays in encouraging the development of closely held corporations and limited-liability companies, which offer the very opportunities for small-scale enterprise that Mr. Dickson seems to want. In those small-scale ventures, of course, it hardly makes sense to suggest that "Offshoring, exploitative marketing, law-buying, and ruining of communities" are required; rather, the reverse is true.

Finally, given the reality that capital is being driven overseas by Sarbanes-Oxley, that its effect is undemocratic because it removes rather than encourages investment opportunities, and that compliance costs so clearly exceed its benefits, I find it difficult to understand how he endorses it. Perhaps Mr. Dickson's problem is with modernity itself, and, again I am sympathetic, but I think he fails to understand much of corporate law that seeks to buttress the kind of ownership and opportunity he appears to favor.

On the Loss of Christian Imagination

Aaron D. Wolf's column, "Farewell to Spare Oom" (*Heresies*), in the March issue is the first lengthy article I've come across that questions the pathetic praise for the pseudo-Christian film *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe*. Such a column is long overdue.

Despite all the un-Christian, non-Christian, and anti-Christian elements in this Disney adaptation of C.S. Lewis's novel, much of the neo-evangelical leadership has lauded this film and even urged its flocks to see it. One such neo-evangelical is Ted Baehr, president of the Christian Film and Television Commission—a man who seems, at times, to have one foot in Babylonian Hollywood and the other in the American heartland. In interviews on talk radio and in a conservative magazine, he spoke almost totally in favor of this movie while barely mentioning the negatives cited by Mr. Wolf.

I believe that the Baehrs and the Dobsons of America are so desperate to find some good coming from Hollywood that they are willing to wink at a few things that they shouldn't be winking at—and they're probably tired of being called bluenoses, too. Regardless, it is obvious that they are losing the stomach and the will to "Fight the good fight of faith" (1 Timothy 6:12). They are doing the opposite of Saint Paul's exhortation in Galatians 6:9: "[L]et us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."

America's Christian establishment, like her political establishment, has fainted. Mr. Wolf's warning may be too late for all of us.

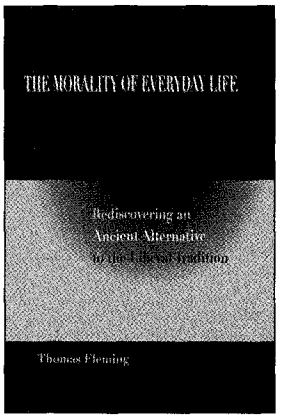
—Kenneth Reynolds,
Bronx, NY

The Morality of Everyday Life:
Rediscovering an Ancient Alternative to the Liberal Tradition

by Thomas Fleming

What passes for conservatism today is really nothing more than the impossible moral and social theories of the Renaissance and Enlightenment, in which universal abstractions, such as democracy and equality, are presented as hard truths, when, in fact, they have never existed in any society in human history. Nonetheless, they are to be applied worldwide, at the tip of a spear (or cruise missile) if necessary.

Dr. Fleming's alternative is rooted in "everyday life," the local realities of blood and soil, custom and tradition, friendship and faith, and in the wisdom born of the experiences these realities beget. This wisdom finds expression in folktales and fables, in ancient Hebrew Scriptures and Greek philosophy, and in medieval casuistry. It is the method to solving ethical problems great and small, and it is the method that undergirds authentic conservatism.



"No more important book has been published in this new century."
—**E. Christian Kopff**
The American Conservative

"Crisp and spellbinding . . . [T]he antidote to the stifling, suffocating, corrosive banality of modern culture and politics."
—**Paul Likoudis**
The Wanderer

"Writing much more accessibly and knowledgeably than most modern professional philosophers, Fleming revivifies the body of thought with which civilization was created and without which it is disintegrating."
—**Ray Olson**
Booklist

Chronicles
A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN CULTURE

- send check or money order to 928 N. Main Street, Rockford, IL 61103
- call (800) 383-0680 to order with MasterCard, Visa, Amex, Discover
- purchase online at the webstore on *ChroniclesMagazine.org*

Hardcover Price $49.95
($44.95 + $5.00 shipping and handling)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

by Steven Greenhut

La-La Land Reacts to the Immigration Protests

In a sane world, the sight of more than a half-million immigrants—many of them illegal—flooding the streets of downtown Los Angeles and waving Mexican flags would have been something of a wake-up call for Southern Californians. It wasn't. No matter how in-your-face the protesters have become, conventional wisdom argues that these nice folks are simply fighting against oppression and injustice and really want to become Americans.

After the original protests, thousands of students, not just in Los Angeles but in suburban school districts, ditched school, blocked freeways, took down the U.S. flag from public-school poles, then raised the Mexican flag and put the upside-down Stars and Stripes underneath it—all the while chanting, "Mexico! Mexico! Mexico!" In the days that followed, the protesters—stung by criticism of their Mexican flags—brought along mostly American ones, but the real message had already been sent.

Other cities across America faced similar demonstrations, but, being Ground Zero for Mexican immigration, Los Angeles endured particularly big and unruly ones. Few people here in La-La Land got the point: Our region is home to millions of unassimilated aliens who are defiantly proud of the country from which they came and view America as little more than a place to earn money. I had always worried about the possibility of Balkanization, but the demonstrations suggest that it is already here.

The local media were in full pander mode, which only highlighted their increasing irrelevance. As the Spanish-speaking population has grown, the circulation numbers and listener ratings for English-language media have been falling quite rapidly. The most popular medium around is Spanish-language radio, and most news accounts credit those radio stations for bringing out the big crowds.

Here is the way that the *Los Angeles Times* described the scene, in a March 27 editorial entitled "Making their voices heard":

> Downtown Los Angeles hosted the most awe-inspiring political rally in recent California history Saturday as an estimated half a million people came together peacefully. The ostensible reason was to protest harsh anti-immigration legislation being considered in Washington, but the rally's broader purpose was to celebrate immigrants and reclaim the initiative in the debate from strident anti-immigration voices. . . .
>
> It's one of those classic pieces of legislation unencumbered by any relation to the real world, existing in a fantastical parallel universe in which the United States can deport about 11 million undocumented workers, let alone avoid suffering and an economic calamity as a result.

The *Times* editorial page itself seems unencumbered by reality in describing the day's event as "a poignant drama featuring an endless stream of immigrants and their supporters wearing white and waving American and Mexican flags (sometimes artfully blended)." Who can complain if they are artfully blended?

Well, at least *that* "fantastical parallel universe" took place on an editorial page. On April 2, I was having brunch near Palm Springs when the banner headline from that city's *Desert Sun* caught my attention: "What if all undocumented left?" Note the use of the p.c. modifier, as if these immigrants simply lost their documents in the Sonoran Desert. Where the *Times* thought it preposterous that illegal immigrants could be sent home, the *Desert Sun* acted as if the entire low-cost labor pool was about to be deported.

"What would happen to the Coachella Valley economy if undocumented workers were not here?" asks writer Lou Hirsh.

> Developers, golf course operators, entrepreneurs, hospitality officials and others with a stake in the economic vibrancy of the region agree with the answer provided by Aftab Dada, general manager of the Hilton resort in Palm Springs. "The impact could be huge here."

Despite a length of 2,900 words, the article found space to quote only one person even mildly supportive of any restrictions on immigration.

Most local politicians, of course, sided with the illegal immigrants, and Roger Cardinal Mahony was on his moral high horse, denouncing criticism of illegal immigrants and insisting that his church would defy the supposed requirement that churches turn illegal immigrants over to the authorities. That bit of dishonesty played quite well in the media. On Good Friday, the diocese of Orange devoted its Stations of the Cross to the plight of illegal immigrants, just in case anyone missed their other politically oriented pronouncements on the matter.

L.A. Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa gave his full endorsement to the crowd, saying that no one was there illegally. The only criminal, he said, was the Republican congressman who sponsored the immigration bill. And on and on went the nuttiness. Maybe Art Torres, the sanctimonious former chairman of the state Democratic Party, had a point when he called the 1994 Proposition 187, which barred illegal immigrants from receiving public benefits, "the last gasp of white America in California." Today, there is no more gasping by any group of taxpayers, white or otherwise, only an acceptance of massive immigration-driven changes that are resulting in enormous local and national problems.

L.A. Times staff writer James Felch wrote, on August 24, 2004, that

> Los Angeles County, which has lost six emergency rooms in a little over a year, is on the brink of a far more serious problem, facing more closures that could jeopardize emergency care for tens of thousands of residents, according to public officials and independent analysts.
>
> The next round of cuts is expected to target large, heavily used emergency rooms at private hospitals. If they proceed as expected, they will reduce by a further 10 percent to 15 percent the county's emergency room capacity, which already has lost the ability to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

serve 75,000 patients in the last 14 months, hospital and healthcare officials say.

Why is the region's healthcare system crumbling, with the availability of emergency-room care approaching a crisis level? Emergency rooms must treat anyone, regardless of his ability to pay, and they are being inundated with nonpaying customers—mostly illegal immigrants, who depend on free healthcare. Throughout Southern California, public-school populations are growing rapidly, and much of the growth is driven by the children of immigrants, legal and otherwise.

Some of my fellow libertarians continue to argue that open borders increase freedom. Even if one is foolish enough not to care about the importance of nation, community, and shared values, one would be hard-pressed to explain how the above scenarios do not lead to bigger, more costly government. The closing of overworked emergency rooms is pushing medical associations to favor socialized medicine; a single-payer system would at least guarantee hospitals payment for these "guests" who show up for free treatment. Growth in school populations leads to endless proposals for new bond measures and more taxes to finance an increasingly dysfunctional school system. (If you want a closer look at a nightmare that could be coming to a school district near you, do a Google search for the "Los Angeles Unified School District.")

These massive demographic changes are transforming this once-conservative region into a bastion of leftism. Orange County used to enjoy a reputation for being a lily-white conservative community. However, between 1990 and 2000, the Latino population of Orange County grew 55 percent. While there are various Latino "communities," some of which are middle class and conservative, there is a large and growing Latino community that is poor and strongly Democratic. As the demographics shift, so do the politics—from right to left, as the 1996 election of U.S. Rep. Loretta Sanchez over B-1 Bob Dornan shows. Local assembly and senate seats in the most heavily immigrant areas have likewise shifted from conservative to solidly liberal.

The new immigrant communities are so large that individual immigrants are more isolated from the broader society than ever before. Newcomers, legal or not, never have to acquire English to survive, let alone learn about the precepts of the American founding.

Today, simple issues take on the hard edge of ethnic politics. Recently, the sheriff of Orange County proposed a seemingly unobjectionable policy: When someone is arrested for a felony, the deputy will check the suspect's immigration status to see if he is here legally. That proposal was vigorously denounced as racist.

I am not against immigration; but it should be done legally, lest the rule of law be undermined. And it needs to be limited, or else we place massive strains on an already bloated welfare state and create Balkanized communities that threaten the fabric of our nation (if anything is left of it). At the very least, we need an honest debate about why America should endlessly import Mexico's poverty, and about the impact of endless immigration on the wages of other low-wage workers.

Yes, assimilation does happen. I can point to scores of wonderful immigrants I know who would never fly the flag of their native country and whom I would choose as neighbors any day over many of the indolent "Anglos" I have known. The problem, though, is that new waves keep coming so rapidly that assimilation is often impossible. Shouldn't we be able to talk honestly about this?

Then again, who cares about assimilation? Writing in the *Lexington Herald-Leader*, Prof. Ruben Nazario takes an increasingly popular view, arguing that assimilation is a bad thing. "Assimilation implies that the culture abandoned is not necessary," he wrote. "It implies that U.S. culture is so valuable and so unique that it doesn't allow cohabitation with other cultures." Instead of assimilation, we should "make both Spanish and English official languages of the United States."

Why even bother with English?

There are plenty of troubling numbers to look at, such as the growth in the U.S. poverty rate and the increase in uninsured residents caused largely by mass immigration. It is not surprising that poverty rates grow when millions of poor people continually move to the United States.

Here in Southern California, you can see a society that looks more and more like the Third World. The rich and famous live in their multimillion-dollar homes near the ocean, enclosed by a sea of barrios where families double and triple up in old tract homes, after which you find the foothills and the further reaches of the area, where middle-class folks live in their million-dollar tract homes, often in gated communities. Meanwhile, the haves—mostly the aging Anglo population—become more protective of their turf, supporting no-growth rules that drive up prices. And the have-nots are becoming more demanding of bigger government.

The companies that play by the rules bear the burden of California's endless levels of punitive regulation, workers' compensation and taxation, and those who work in the underground economy. Why pay a mover the going rate when you can hire three guys at one tenth of the price down at the city-run daywork center, where illegal immigrants await employment, protected from any snooping immigration cops?

Politically, the Democrats love Mexican immigration, because the net result is a strong shift toward their party. Republicans are of mixed views. The grassroots want action; but the leadership still remembers the days of Prop. 187, when Republicans were depicted as hateful for supporting it, arguably paving the way for a backlash against the GOP. Republicans are caught in a catch-22: If they do nothing about the borders, the new immigrants will continue to come and support Democrats by about a 2-to-1 margin; if they try to stem the tide of immigration, they risk pushing the present Latino voters further into the Democrats' arms. Not surprisingly, California has gone from a state that often supported Republicans to one in which the Republican presidential nominee cannot get within one million votes of the Democrat.

Readers from the Midwest and the South should study this picture carefully. As Nicole Gaouette wrote in the *Los Angeles Times* (June 25, 2005), "Illegal immigrants are moving in unprecedented numbers to the southeastern United States, choosing that area over traditional 'destination states' such as California."

Or, as a certain California governor once said, "*Hasta la vista*, Baby!"

Save a Stamp!

***E-mail* your letters to the editor to:**

polemics@chroniclesmagazine.org

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

SEN. RICHARD SHELBY (R-AL) received a letter on March 23 from a gaggle of organizations representing the financial industry. The group included the American Bankers Association, the Bankers' Association for Finance and Trade, the Investment Company Institute, the Securities Industry Association, the Bond Market Association, the Financial Services Forum, and the Financial Services Roundtable. They wrote in opposition to strengthening the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (CFIUS), a reform effort that Senator Shelby, chairman of the Senate Banking Committee, is leading.

CFIUS was created in 1975 to review the impact of foreign transactions on national security and the defense industrial base. Its powers were expanded in 1988 with the adoption of the Exon-Florio amendment to the Defense Production Act. Shelby's concern that CFIUS is not being vigilant enough was triggered last summer when the state-owned Chinese National Overseas Oil Company tried to buy American-owned Unocal, which possessed oil reserves around the world that Beijing coveted. CFIUS has become more famous in recent months in the wake of the attempt by state-owned Dubai Ports World to gain control of several U.S. ports through the acquisition of the British firm Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company. CFIUS has the authority to block foreign takeovers of U.S.-based assets or mandate changes in the terms of any foreign acquisition if it affects national security.

The bankers and financiers want CFIUS to continue rubber-stamping all deals. The moneymen profit from making deals. The content and the consequences of the deals do not matter to them, nor do they care who is involved, so long as their checks clear. This self-centered, *laissez-faire* attitude is not how national-security policy should be made.

The bankers and financiers paid lip service to national security, of course, writing, "The Congress has rightly taken a strong position on the importance of national security concerns arising from international trade and foreign investment. The financial services sector shares Congress' commitment to national security." But the rest of the letter was an argument against actually doing anything to fulfill the commitment to security.

The core of the letter reads as follows: "We are concerned, however, that recognition of the beneficial role played by foreign investment in U.S. job creation and economic growth is being lost in the current environment. . . . These relationships have greatly benefitted America, with foreign companies employing nearly 5.3 million Americans, while bringing to the U.S. new ideas, technology, and innovative products and practices." It would be hard to cram more misleading comments into such a concise statement.

Foreign direct investment (FDI) can create jobs for Americans, if it is used to build new factories, research labs, or infrastructure in the United States. But most FDI is used simply to buy up existing productive assets. Such takeovers can cost jobs as redundant positions are eliminated. For example, French-owned Alcatel has recently announced a "merger" with U.S.-owned Lucent Technologies. The resultant corporation will be 60-percent French-owned with a majority of French (or European) directors, and it will be headquartered in Paris. The Alcatel-Lucent combination is expected to lay off 8,000 employees, and most (if not all) are likely to be in the United States, as its French managers consolidate operations in their own country.

The famous Bell Labs is part of Lucent, so Alcatel's purchase will also be an example of foreign finance being used to acquire American technology, not to infuse the U.S. economy with foreign innovation. This is almost always the case in defense capability, CFIUS's area of concern. The United States spends five times as much on military research and development as do members of the European Union. As Richard Olver, chairman of BAE, Britain's largest defense firm, told *Defense News* (February 25, 2005), "It's obviously clear that the extent of R&D in the United States is a very different order of magnitude to the R&D investment in the rest of the world, including the United Kingdom. . . . so our first line of strategy is to have a bias to grow in the United States." Why take the risk of investing in R&D when a firm can just wait and buy up the results later? The French are particularly keen on this strategy, with France's leading defense-electronics firm Thales announcing last month a new campaign to acquire "second-tier" U.S. defense contractors.

If American firms tried to buy French firms in similar industries, they would be prohibited from doing so. Thales, for example, is one-third owned by the French government, whose "golden shares" would block any deal. Last August 31, Paris announced that it would protect from foreign buyouts firms in strategic domestic industries. French Finance Minister Thierry Breton stated that the country's "very sensitive sectors" would be shielded from foreign bids. While the complete list of protected industries has not been made public, some information has leaked out. Telecommunications companies are on the protected list, so Lucent could not take over Alcatel. Defense, biotechnology, space technology, casinos, encryption, IT security, and some medical suppliers are also reportedly on the list.

Paris has openly opposed a takeover bid by the world's largest steel maker, Mittal Steel (headquartered in India), for Europe's Arcelor. And it has been accused by Rome of brokering a merger of two French firms, energy giant Gaz de France and the energy and environment services group Suez, to head off an anticipated takeover bid for Suez by the Italian firm ENEL. France's turn toward protectionism follows a global pattern in which states are shielding their strategic industries from foreign rivals. It is time the United States got serious about protecting her technological and industrial preeminence and joined this trend.

—*William R. Hawkins*

THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION could be cooking up an "October surprise"—an attack on Iran—to boost the lagging fortunes of the President and the Republican Party, according to a recent editorial by Patrick J. Buchanan. With midterm elections coming in November, the Bush White House has been cranking up the anti-Iran rhetoric, presenting Tehran's nuclear program as a clear-and-present danger to the United States. According to the White House line, the result of nuclear research by the "mad mullahs" would be an Islamic bomb in the hands of terrorists set to attack the American "Great Satan." Never mind

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that the best the Iranians could reportedly hope for would be enough nuclear material in five to ten years for one bomb. By taking out Iran's nuclear facilities, the President could not only boost his own ratings but recreate the rally-round-the-flag effect of the heady post-September 11 period. The Republicans, according to Buchanan, could "hold onto both houses in November, costing Democrats their best chance in a decade of recouping power." Buchanan's scenario sounds about right; what's more, Bush II could use his credentials as a wartime leader to demand that Congress pass an amnesty for millions of illegal aliens, the elusive Golden Fleece of his presidency.

Meanwhile, *New Yorker* columnist Seymour Hersh claimed that the Bush administration was considering using "a bunker-buster tactical nuclear weapon . . . against [Iran's] underground nuclear sites." The "mini-nuke" could prove to be an important part of the Bush administration's dubious preemptive-war doctrine. After all, both current and future members of the "Axis of Evil" could conceal and protect their weapons of mass destruction and weapons-development programs in underground facilities. Hersh's claims meshed with earlier reports that Washington would launch an air campaign against Tehran, perhaps this summer, and that U.S. aircraft were already probing Iranian air defenses and making practice bombing runs, while Special Forces units were scouting out targets on the ground for the air campaign. True, the "mini-nuke" reports could be a calculated leak by the White House intended to turn up the heat in its psychological warfare with the Iranian regime, but few seemed to doubt that the Bush administration was at least capable of considering a preemptive nuclear strike.

Yet, even with the previously unspeakable threat of a nuclear attack on the table, and in spite of the administration's less-than-unsoiled reputation for truthfulness, a large segment of the American public seems to be accepting the Iranian nuclear-holocaust threat at face value. The White House should thank firebrand Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad for that. Ahmadinejad, whose stunning election victory in 2005 may have been aided by the Bush administration's war in Iraq and "Axis of Evil" rhetoric, has played a key role in making the White House's case against Iran seem credible. Apart from his calls to wipe out Israel, the Iranian president has bragged about his country successfully enriching uranium (apparently only a small amount that is insufficient for producing weapons), reinforcing the Bush administration's claims of a nuclear terrorist threat. Ahmadinejad, while not a cleric, nonetheless fits the "mad mullah" image, giving the War Party in Washington a perfect nemesis for its apocalyptic scenarios.

It seems unlikely that Tehran would commit national suicide by using nukes in some kind of plot against the United States. Ahmadinejad may be a fire breather, but the collective leadership that actually rules Iran has proved itself to be more rational than the White House would like us to believe. The Iranians are most likely seeking nuclear weapons for quite rational reasons: deterring a nuclear-armed Israel and preventing "regime change" by another "coalition of the willing." Indeed, the Bush administration's threats of preemptive "mini-nuke" attacks against potential adversaries will likely spur on the quest for nukes by possible targets of an endless "War on Terror" and/or campaign to "eliminate tyranny from the world."

Diplomacy and deterrence have worked before—and what would be the likely consequences of a U.S. strike on Iran? As Mr. Buchanan writes, "Iran could push its Shia allies to attack British and U.S. troops and send Revolutionary Guard 'volunteers' in, which could mean a U.S. debacle, unless we responded with more American troops. Tehran could make us pay a price in blood in Afghanistan. Tehran could also send its agents into the emirates, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia to attack U.S. installations, setting the Near East ablaze and oil prices soaring to $200 a barrel, plunging the West into recession. . . . Thus a pre-emptive war on Iran, while a political triumph for the president this fall, could, like the invasion of Iraq, prove a long-term disaster." Indeed, Iranian Revolutionary Guard leaders have reportedly identified 29 U.S. and British Persian Gulf region targets for attack.

But a disaster in the Persian Gulf, and the Bush team using an attack on Tehran to further an immigration disaster at home, are not the end of the damage an Iran campaign might do. George Washington University's Charles Peña has argued that, if the Bush White House is serious about using nuclear weapons preemptively (or even continues its threats to do so), the United States can expect "rogue state" leaders to "strike at the US first." The "natural barriers" preventing those leaders from forming alliances with terrorists "will be eroded," and the incentive for them to develop and supply terrorists with weapons of mass destruction "will increase."

On the other hand, maybe the warmongering neocons will be quite happy if that is exactly what happens, providing more targets of opportunity for their global crusade to "end tyranny." Could it be that they share more in common with Ahmadinejad and Bin Laden than they would care to admit?

—*Wayne Allensworth*

OBITER DICTA: Make plans now to attend the 17th Annual Meeting of the **John Randolph Club**, October 13-14, 2006, in Rockford, Illinois. The weekend will explore state and local solutions to abortion, immigration, Islam, the manufacturing crisis, and threats to property ownership. Also planned for the weekend: *Chronicles*' 30th-anniversary party and a special optional program celebrating the American Midwest. Confirmed speakers include *Chronicles* editors Thomas Fleming, Roger D. McGrath, Stephen B. Presser, Srdja Trifkovic, and Chilton Williamson, Jr. The conference will be held at Rockford's premiere hotel, Cliffbreakers, overlooking the mighty Rock River. Watch future issues of *Chronicles* or visit *ChroniclesMagazine.org* for more details.

Our poet this month is **Peter Dalton**. Mr. Dalton, who lives in Cape Girardeau, Missouri, has also had his work published in the *Dark Horse*, a magazine of Scottish-American Poetry.

Our cover and interior art are provided by our designer, **Melanie Anderson**. Mrs. Anderson received her B.F.A. from Northern Illinois University.

Additional interior art is provided by **Elizabeth Wolf** and **Nicholas Garrie**. Miss Wolf received her B.F.A. from the School of Art at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and resides in Chicago. Mr. Garrie, who works in a variety of media, hails from Rockford.

the Chronicles FilmLog
Now available at www.ChroniclesMagazine.org

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

by Thomas Fleming

Imposing Utopia

George W. Bush campaigned for the presidency on a pledge not to engage in the nation-building experiments that characterized the Clinton years, and, like every other president of the 20th century, he did not simply break his major promises: He did exactly the opposite. Naturally, his administration has plenty of excuses. Failing to discover those famous WMDs, whose location they knew with pinpoint accuracy *before the invasion*, the President's power ministers and their advisors had to come up with other justifications, and building democracy had a nobler ring to it than, say, acquiring oil or protecting Israel.

The President has been uncharacteristically clear in stating the objectives of his own experiment in democratic nation-building: "Raising up a democracy requires the rule of law, protection of minorities and strong, accountable institutions that last longer than a single vote," and he lauds the "dramatic progress of a new democracy."

In the early years of the experiment, lavish funding was given to the usual agencies and conspiracies, which, under the guise of building democratic institutions, work to undermine and destabilize regimes we regard as unfriendly or even uncooperative. The National Endowment for Democracy received some $71 million for promoting democracy in Iraq, and these funds were disbursed to its American satellites as well as to Iraqi groups with such high-sounding names as the Organization for a Model Iraqi Society. The success of this effort can be measured every day in Iraq, not only on the streets, where sectarian violence has reached the level of a true civil war, but even in the Iraqi parliament, which still, despite mounting U.S. threats, took many months to form a government, democratic or otherwise. The President apparently agrees with this assessment of his experiment, since funding for these projects has virtually run out.

Only a child or a diehard Republican could have believed that American-style democracy would work in Iraq. Words and laws do not make a constitution, but the character of the people. Clyde Wilson has made this argument for as long as I can remember, but so did the late Octavio Paz, in his brilliant reflections on Mexico, *The Labyrinth of Solitude*. Mexican liberals adopted the language of bourgeois liberalism found in Western constitutions, but the newly independent states of Latin America had no bourgeoisie to speak of, let alone the traditions of self-government that Britain and the United States had been developing for centuries. The Mexican Revolution of the early 20th century, while it pretended—not always without justification—to address these evils, has only strengthened the power of a wealthy ruling class that continues to exploit the poor, whose only relief is America's undefended southern border.

If Mexico, with legal and political traditions going back to Europe, has not succeeded, over the past 200 years, in establishing democratic capitalism, Iraq's hopes must be dim indeed. But far more interesting than our inevitable failure to impose democracy in Iraq are the assumptions that the Bush administration *seems* to take for granted. What, in the first place, does George W. Bush mean when he says he is building democracy? On the one hand, he believes it is a victory for democracy when Palestinians vote for Hamas and want to develop a society very unlike our own. On the other hand, democracy means a list of rights only guaranteed in a few Western democracies: not only the right to vote but the freedoms of religion, press, and speech, and the right to due process and trial by jury guaranteed by our own Bill of Rights. Yet, when the puppet government we have installed in Afghanistan presumes to apply Islamic law to a Christian convert, the President is "deeply troubled," having heard "the fact that a person who has converted away from Islam may be held to account. That's not the universal application of the values that I talked about."

The President's disturbed state of mind stems, at least in part, from his firm belief that Islam and democracy are compatible. Back in November 2003, the President presented us with this insight as a self-evident truth "that Islam . . . is consistent with democratic rule. Democratic progress is found in many predominantly Muslim countries—in Turkey and Indonesia, and Senegal and Albania, Niger and Sierra Leone."

Senegal, Niger, and Sierra Leone have, for several years, maintained constitutional order and a rule of law, and, although one wishes them well, it is far too early to speak of stable "democratic rule": There was a time, for example, when the Ivory Coast and even Haiti were being touted for their democratic progress. Turkey and Albania are another matter. Both Turks and Albanians have a long history of violence and militarism, and the Albanian civil war of the late 1990's was an orgy of destruction. According to Amnesty International, Albanians today, in and out of government, routinely abuse women (rape and white slavery are common), and other "human rights" groups have documented an appalling number of people tortured by prison guards and beaten by the police.

"Democratic" Turkey has a long history of persecution of Christians, which continues up to this day. Some progress has been made in both countries, but, if President Bush regards them as beacons of democracy in the Islamic world, I shudder to think of what democratic privileges he may be preparing for the American people.

So, on the one hand, democracy means abiding by election results and maintaining the rule of law, while, on the other, no democratically elected anti-American regime is really democratic, and any rogue state can be a democracy so long as it plays ball with the U.S. State Department. On the third hand (the hand that every politician has in our pockets), democracy means the conquest of a foreign country and the imposition of an unpopular alien regime. Democracy can have so many meanings because, to the President's low and dishonest speechwriters,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

words are only little gadgets with which to trick the voters into giving favorable answers in opinion polls. The strategy is no longer working for George W. Bush, whose approval ratings have reached Nixonian levels.

Throughout the 80's and 90's, neoconservatives were proclaiming the glories of global democracy. One of their favorite sayings in those days was that democracies never wage aggressive war. Even they—as ignorant of history as, say, Daniel Bell and Irving Kristol are—could not possibly have been serious. Was the American Union a democratic state when it attacked the Confederacy? Was Britain a democracy when she plotted war against Germany in the opening years of the 20th century? Was the government of Jacobin France a democracy when it set out to conquer Europe? Or the United States a democracy when she invaded the Philippines? Was Athens a democracy when it converted the Delian League into the Athenian Empire and provoked war with Sparta and its allies, or when it slaughtered the men of a tiny island (Melos) and sold their women and children into slavery for the sole reason that the Melians refused to submit to the Athenian Empire?

At the end of World War II, Lawrence Dennis was tried for treason because he had accused FDR of defending democracy abroad in order to destroy it at home. If Dennis were alive today and making a similar argument, he would not be put on trial, because, 60 years after the last good war, there is no one left capable of following a rational argument. Political argument has been shouted down by the deafening raspberry of ten million perpetual adolescents lobotomized by television, computers, and the worst education that money can buy. Still, just before the dark descends, we might ask ourselves if any imperial people has ever remained free. Ask the Athenians, ask the Romans, ask the Aztecs.

Democratic peoples are not always as bloodthirsty as the Athenians who created democracy, but neither are monarchies or oligarchies. The difference is that the elite that pulls all the strings in a democracy must always lie to the people to persuade them that every aggressive war is actually a war to save "democracy" or impose "liberty" on people who may not want it. The result is that the oligarchs who rule all modern democracies are more corrupt, more childish, more vulgar, more dishonest than the overt oligarchs, whether Roman and Venetian senators or Latin American dictators.

It is small wonder that our poor President is bewildered by his own rhetoric. Democracies mean free elections, which are an expression of popular liberty, and therefore will lead to peace, always and everywhere. Except when Hamas wins, or Hezbollah picks up votes in Lebanon, or the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, or Islamic fanatics in Iran and Algeria, or nationalists in Slovakia or Serbia or Belarus. Then, it turns out that democracy is part of a painful process that must be guided by the sober heads of the European Union or the United States. In Serbia, we supported the gangster Zoran Djindjic as a defender of democracy but have always opposed Vojislav Kostunica, a constitutionalist and expert on the *Federalist*.

Once upon a time, it made sense for loyal Americans to acquiesce in the pious fraud that equated "democracy" with responsible and limited constitutional government. Those days are gone. Any legitimate constitutional system rests on a certain stalemating of the forces that aim at despotism. The legislature checks the executive, and the courts check the legislature; populist unrest disciplines the aristocracy, and the Church may humiliate the king. These days, however, there appears to be no check on the ambitions of our rulers, whose control of the media makes them virtually immune to failure. Clintons and Bushes may squabble over budget details, but both dynasties agree that it is our sublime mission to fight terrorism in Iraq while allowing the terrorists to cross our southern border with impunity. Terrorism seems to be the only reality check this regime faces.

I am reminded of W.S. Gilbert's prescient farce on a modern state in which "We have no need to think, because our monarch anticipates all our wants, and our political opinions are formed for us by the journals to which we subscribe." The ruler is, however, subjected to the terrorist whim of the two judges who may, for any reason, direct the "Public Exploder" to blow him up. This "ideal Republic" is described as "Despotism tempered by dynamite." Post-Christian American adventurism has provoked its nemesis: a global terror campaign waged by pitiless men who believe in a god.

The United States has never been and will never be a democracy. The original confederation of states was founded as a semi-aristocratic republic, and, by 1860, it had developed many features of popular government. Between 1860 and 1960, both the Constitution and popular government were converted, under the usual justifications of war and economic crisis, into an imperial plutocracy. In the decades since, the three branches of the federal government have dismantled whatever democratic features remained as an obstacle to the total state: the rights of states and local communities; the moral and social influence of Christian churches; the authority of parents over their children; the main-street businessmen who stood in the way of Wall Street and Wal-Mart. All of this was done in the name of democracy. The subjects of the American state are now without any defense against their ruling class, which is why our Peter Pans can only let off steam in three-word comments on websites.

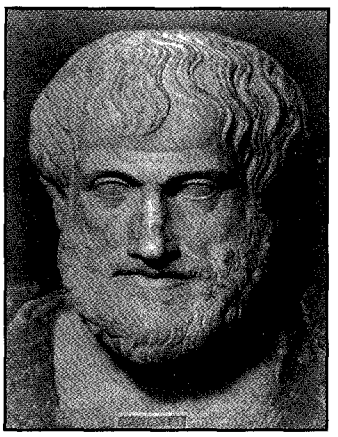
Americans, if they wish to do any good in the world, must learn to give up all of the clichés they were taught in civics textbooks and patriotic speeches and look at the reality of the world our rulers have created. Even the briefest glimpse at this made-in-America hell should scare the most stalwart Republican out of the GOP and the yellowest dog out of the Democratic Party. Do not look for mass defections in the next election. Self-deception is the rule here, and, although the lies neither begin nor end with "democracy," they all culminate in that lie to trump all lies.

Read Thomas Fleming's

HARD *Right!*

at www.ChroniclesMagazine.org

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



The Greek Conservative Mind

The Greeks invented political philosophy . . . but not out of thin air

The ancient Greeks liberated themselves from the shackles of religion and tradition to pursue a dream of democracy, equality, and human rights. Right?

Wrong. We do well to remember the Greeks as they really were: their aristocratic pursuit of virtue, their general disdain for democracy, and their strong attachments to family and religion.

"The Greek Conservative Mind" is taught by Dr. Thomas Fleming, who is regarded as a leading authority on Greek lyric verse. Originally presented in the fall of 2004 as a lecture series at the Institute, the course now comprises 16 recorded lectures (on CD or audiotape) and a study guide with suggested readings, key terms, and discussion questions.

For more information, please call Jan Kooistra at (815) 964-5811 or e-mail *jkooistra@rockfordinstitute.org*.

THE ROCKFORD INSTITUTE
928 North Main Street
Rockford, Illinois 61103

Price: $175.00
(Please indicate your choice of tapes or CDs)

- send check or money order to 928 N. Main Street, Rockford, IL 61103
- call (800) 383-0680 to order with MasterCard, Visa, Amex, Discover
- purchase online at the webstore on *ChroniclesMagazine.org*

Two books by Celtic historian
and *Chronicles* contributor **J. Michael Hill**

Celtic Warfare, 1595-1763

&

Fire & Sword:
Sorley Boy McDonnell and the Rise of Clan Ian Mor, 1538-1590

Scotland and Ireland produced the best fighting men in Europe from the 16th through the 18th centuries. These two books tell the story of a people who struggled against great odds to preserve a traditional civilization against the modern English state. ***Celtic Warfare*** (softcover, 203 pages, 1986 and 2005) details the continuity in Scottish and Irish strategy, tactics, logistics, and weaponry from the Irish wars of the 1590's to the end of the French & Indian War in 1763. ***Fire & Sword*** (hardcover, 321 pages, 1993) centers upon the tumultuous life and career of Sorley Boy McDonnell (1510-1590), whose sagacious leadership made Clan Ian Mor a major force in the development of the Celtic heartland in the 16th century.

Order both books for the special price of $40.00 (postpaid).
***Celtic Warfare* alone: $20.00 ppd.; *Fire & Sword* alone: $25.00 ppd.**
Send check or money order payable to Michael Hill, P.O. Box 760, Killen, AL 35645.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

by Joseph Sobran

The Way We Were

I am not by nature, I think, a grumpy old man. But, at the age of 60, I feel entitled to comment on some inescapable facts about the younger generation. If my judgments seem harsh, I can only invite the reader to try to refute them, if he can. Or if she can. (Equality requires every *he* to be accompanied by a *she*.)

Yes, I know the automatic response: "Every generation thinks the one that comes after it is degenerate," followed by a quotation from Socrates, Cicero, or Hypotenuse to the effect that the kids of his (or her) day are a bad lot. From this we are to infer that this ancient complaint has always been overwrought. Never mind that the complainers' societies usually did perish soon after these dire warnings. Often enough, the grumpy old men (or women, as the case may be) turn out to be prophetic.

Look around, reader. In this computer age, how many of today's youth could, if necessary, change a typewriter ribbon? In this age of the compact disc, how many could change a phonograph needle? How many could open or close a car window by cranking it manually? How many could get up, walk across the room, and change the television channel by turning a knob—or, if the knob fell off, by using pliers?

How many of these pampered epicures know what it is to wash dishes by hand? To get ice cubes out of a metal tray by pulling a lever? To reheat supper without a microwave? To sharpen a pencil with a jackknife? To change a cloth diaper with safety pins? To brush one's teeth with a manual toothbrush requiring wrist action?

Today, such tasks are done, when they are done at all, by hiring illegal aliens. But in my day, we did them ourselves. They had to be done, and we did them without whining. If this sometimes meant getting ink on one's hands, or cutting or pricking a finger, or breaking a nail, so be it.

On the other hand, these things built character. They prepared one for the endless and ruthless Malthusian-Darwinian struggle for survival. Life didn't come with a government warning label. It was "nature, red in tooth and claw." Knowing how to use a can opener—and I don't mean an electric one—could mean the difference, quite literally, between feast and famine. There was no room for such frivolities as moral relativism and moral ambiguity. It came down to kill or be killed. When the ribbon wore out, you changed it—or else.

Today's youth possess only two survival skills, if you can call them that: for the abysmally helpless, demanding immediate government action; and, for the more enterprising, identity theft. Such recent technologies as the pocket calculator have eliminated the need for such complex mental operations as borrowing and carrying in order to subtract and add; cassettes long ago displaced the rigors of the reel-to-reel tape recorder; push-button dialing has made the rotary dial a distant memory, a quaint curiosity seen only in old black-and-white movies and chiefly associated with Barbara Stanwyck, screaming (speaking of the struggle for survival).

Darwin and Malthus would curl their upper lips derisively at this generation, but the laugh's on them: Their ideas are obsolete. Or so it would appear, as government has made the competition for survival seem as remote as the caveman (and/or woman). Today, government provides every manner of protection, security, defense, safety, care, aid, assistance, rights, and services. It calls even its most brazenly predatory activities "services": the Internal Revenue Service and the Selective Service. Not to put too fine a point on it, robbing and killing are now government services.

This being so, it takes a pretty nimble semanticist to keep track of, and to penetrate, all the evils, physical and metaphysical, government is now allegedly protecting us from: foreign enemies; terrorism; poverty; discrimination (including homophobia); stock-market fraud; copyright violation; global warming; tobacco (though tobacco is also subsidized); impurities in air, water, and food; illiteracy; and so on. Meanwhile, on the positive side, government promotes diversity at home and democracy abroad.

I don't pretend that this list of the functions of government is complete. I merely note that it seems rather, well, miscellaneous. In fact, that seems to be the whole idea, if there is one: that government should deal with whatever comes up, unless it has to do with, say, religion, where the First Amendment kicks in. Then, for once, government shouldn't do anything, because, after all, this is a pluralistic democracy, the kind we are trying to produce in Iraq. But since education and pluralism go hand in hand, public schools should inculcate Darwinism, which is scientific, but must ban alternatives to Darwinism, which are religiously motivated. The rationale is simple and compelling.

At this point, the reader (of either sex) may well be asking himself (or herself), *What is he driving at?* Just this: Today's youth are hopelessly ill equipped to address the complex problems we now face. In my day, the issue was stark: survival. Hobbes, Malthus, and Darwin had laid it on the line: a war of every man against every man (or woman).

On September 11, 2001, however, all the rules suddenly changed. The foregoing is, necessarily, no more than a mere preliminary sketch, no doubt colored by my own youthful flirtations with existentialism, phenomenology, and astrology. Stay tuned. ◈

To Subscribe:
(800) 877-5459
or visit
ChroniclesMagazine.org

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Cincinnatus, Call the Office!

by Clyde Wilson

". . . a republican government, which many great writers assert to be incapable of subsisting long, except by the preservation of virtuous principles."
—John Taylor of Caroline

On a summer morning in 1842, near the end of its session, the U.S. Senate was busy receiving committee reports. The Committee on the Judiciary reported favorably on a bill to pay the estate of William Hull, whose heirs had petitioned for compensation for his government service. Hull had held appointments as general in command of the Northwest and as governor of Michigan Territory at the beginning of the War of 1812.

Mr. Calhoun of South Carolina shattered the quiet routine of the Senate. He rose to express amazement at what he had just heard:

> He was, in the first place, surprised that the representatives of General Hull could ever think of presenting this claim to Congress. He would not be more so, if the representatives of [Benedict] Arnold should present a claim for his pay as a general in our service, after he had committed his treason, on the ground that he had held the commission of a general, which had not been revoked.

The deep and universal public condemnation of General Hull had never been reversed and never would be, Calhoun said. It was a matter John C. Calhoun knew well, having at the time been a member of the House of Representatives who had been straining desperately to support the war effort: Hull had surrendered his troops and the Detroit fortifications on the first appearance of the British, without firing a shot in resistance. He had blamed his act on a lack of preparation and support by his superiors—something that might excuse defeat but could not excuse cowardice. Hull was court-martialed and ordered to be shot, though President Madison had granted a reprieve.

Mr. Calhoun asked the Senate:

> How could his pay as Governor be allowed, when there was, for the time, no such Territory as Michigan? It had, by his own act, become a British Province and remained so till it was re-conquered by the army under General Harrison. With what show, then, of justice or equity, could he be paid for governing a territory that did not exist, and which had ceased to exist by his own act? The error of the committee consisted in supposing that the commission—the mere paper and wax—and not the service, gave the pay.

What a contrast, Calhoun continued, this situation presented with the conduct of Gen. Andrew Jackson. A federal judge had fined Jackson $1,000 for supposed damages to certain private property in preparing the defenses of New Orleans. Jackson had paid the fine from his own pocket and got on with the business of winning the battle and concluding the war with a great victory. Yet Jackson had never been compensated. "How strange that such unequal justice should be meted out by the committee to General Jackson, who terminated the war with glory, and General Hull, who commenced it with disgrace!"

Calhoun might well have expanded his examples from the history of American republican virtue. George Washington had stood in the Continental Congress in 1775 and acknowledged his acceptance of the perilous mission of taking command of the Continental forces already engaged in fighting with the world's greatest power. He would accept no pay, Washington said, though he hoped that the Congress would repay his expenses in their service. And, at the end of the war, Washington, like the Roman hero Cincinnatus, had disbanded his army and returned to his private life, though there was plenty of room for dissatisfaction at niggling and inadequate responses to his claims.

General Hull's bill, among other things, demonstrates the difference between Southerners and people from lower New England. Hull was, not surprisingly, from Connecticut, which has supplied a vastly disproportionate share of bad examples in American history: Benedict Arnold, P.T. Barnum, John Brown, William O. Douglas, William F. Buckley, Lowell Weicker, the Bush family, *etc.* Senator Calhoun, a former secretary of war, was well aware that Massachusetts and Connecticut had more men receiving Revolutionary War pensions than they had ever had active soldiers, while Francis Marion's veterans and the heroes of Kings Mountain, who had played a vital part in winning American independence, had never considered patriotism as a claim on the Treasury; even if they had, they would have lacked the proper paperwork. Everyone was aware that Massachusetts had, for a quarter-century, been presenting annually a demand to Congress to be paid for the nonservice of its militia in the War of 1812.

The incident of the bill to compensate the Hull heirs illustrates a late phase of the struggle in the American polity between office as an honor and a trust and office as a source of profit. Virtue was obviously already on the defensive in Calhoun's day, though the founding generation had had a strong sense that the diminishing of virtue would spell doom for the noble experiment of self-government of the people. Though the need for virtue in the people and in their leaders was a given, the exact connotations of the concept could differ. From the beginning, the New England idea of republican virtue had a commercial, collectivist, government-as-engine-of-prosperity cast which harked back to the Puritan Commonwealth.

Contributing editor Clyde Wilson teaches history at the University of South Carolina, Columbia.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The more idealistic version below the Susquehanna drew inspiration from the highest patriotism of republican Rome. (Whether the basis for this idea was historically accurate is another question.) It was no accident that Joseph Addison's *Cato* was Washington's favorite play and that Washington was often depicted in Roman garb, that officers of the War of Independence called their veterans group the Society of the Cincinnati, and that the seats of the American governments were called capitols. Indeed, Thomas Jefferson modeled the capitol of Virginia on a Roman building he had seen in France.

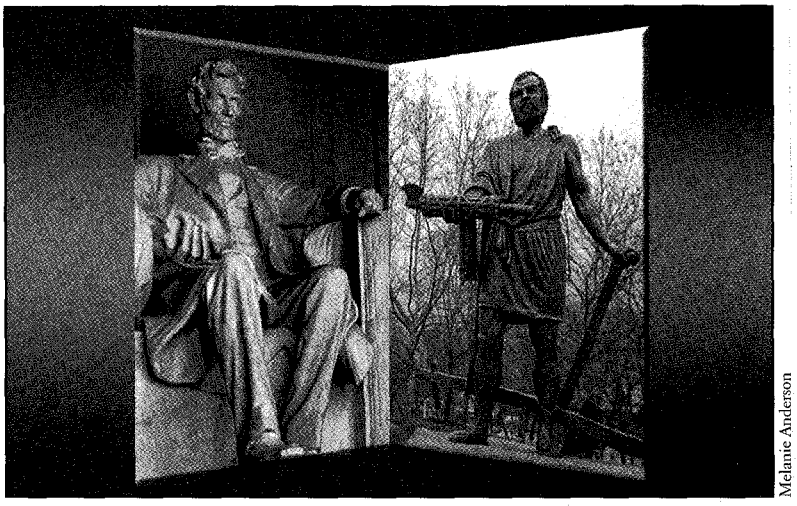
The idea was this: To lead the people was an obligation, an honor, and a trust, which, properly executed, was the highest example of patriotism. Office should not be a job, a source of profit, or an opportunity for self-promotion. Ambition for glory could be excused as the engine of patriotic effort, but ambition for money and power was defection from republican virtue and signaled a taste for usurpation and corruption. Difficult as it may be to believe today, in the Old Republic, public office often required a sacrifice of private interests. Many a good man found that his law practice, plantation, or commercial firm (not to mention health and disposition) had suffered from only a three-month session in the federal city amongst the demagogues, lobbyists, and mosquitoes. Things are rather different these days, when nobody is ever observed leaving Congress less affluent than when he entered. And, in the Old Republic, a former member of the government going on the payroll of a foreign concern or government—if it had even been possible to imagine it—would have been instantly and universally condemned as treason.

The history of national politics up to 1861 is largely the history of a holding action against the "American System"—essentially meaning the use of the government to promote private profit by bounties, grants, tariffs, public debt, bank charters, and other instruments of corporate welfare. A less-noticed aspect of the struggle against consolidated government that was lost in 1865, though it loomed large in the minds of contemporaries, was the "spoils of office"—the holding of office itself as a source of profit. As in most all matters, the South clung to older practices: Being chosen for public trust was a recognition of achievement and of already-existing status. Increasingly in the North, the office itself was sought as the source of status, and the pursuit of office was bound up in the power of political-party machines to buy votes with public money.

As the 19th century wore on, New Englanders increasingly and aggressively claimed virtue as their special possession, with an accompanying disdain for others. New England spokesmen, shortly after enacting a 40-percent tariff protection for their industries, rose in Congress to declare scornfully that the low price of cotton was caused by Southerners' lack of Yankee enterprise. The sign of virtue increasingly became profit-making activity—through private enterprise, or rent seeking, or some combination of the two.

The belief in superior virtue and virtue-as-profit-making gathered power over Northern society until it achieved consolidation and institutionalization with Lincoln—the first president elected with no record of achievement or service to the commonwealth but solely through political management and the promise of payoffs (favorable legislation *and* public jobs and contracts). Lincoln's victory was a coup for the American System, establishing a permanent structure of welfare for industrialists and bankers. It also brought on a revolutionary expansion of the spoils system.

Whether the Republicans started and kept up the war deliberately for the patronage is debatable, but there is no doubt that they embraced their opportunity with the greatest relish. Lincoln's war was a source of profit for a vast array of Northern contractors (some of whom made killings that founded fortunes that still exist today) and beneficiaries of the public payroll. (The Confederate army took new recruits into veteran units from their home territories, whereas the U.S. Army, every time new recruits or conscripts were scraped together, created a new regiment of amateurs. It was not a good idea from a military standpoint, but it was great politics—you could buy a lot of support for the party with new officers' commissions and supply contracts.)



Melanie Anderson

The corruption of the Grant administrations and the Reconstruction state governments was simply a continuance of the same game, without the excuse of a shooting war. There followed rapidly a vast pension system for those who had fought to overcome "the rebellion." For decades, one of the biggest items in the federal budget was Union Army pensions. It was the first great American entitlement cornucopia. Little distinction was made between men who had fought the whole war and those who had worn the uniform for three months of static service. The paper and wax was all.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Pecksniffian do-gooders promoted "civil-service reform," but about all that accomplished was to replace political hacks in government office with unremovable tin-pot tyrants determined to use the government to improve the citizens—whether the citizens wanted to be improved in that particular way or not. And so it has gone, down to our own day. Americans no longer have a concept of responsibility in public office. The press reports that Gen. Colin Powell is suffering from the "painful blot" on his (inflated) reputation that he earned because of his part in bringing on the Iraq debacle. Presumably, we are not supposed to condemn lies that are catastrophic for the country but only to commiserate with the general because his lies have damaged his reputation. Now, as after September 11, 2001, officeholders who fail catastrophically in their responsibilities to the people are rewarded with promotions, reelection, great increases of money and power, and presidential medals. It does not even occur to anybody to point out that the pay ought to be for service, not for the paper and wax.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Judging for the People

Democracy, the Supreme Court, and the Constitution

by Stephen B. Presser

For just about the last half-century, since Earl Warren became chief justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, the American legal academy has pondered something usually referred to as the "legitimacy problem." Law-school professors have believed that there is a difficulty inherent in the fact that an unelected, isolated body of nine jurists working in a marble palace in Washington has the power to dictate what rules will govern our country. There have been occasions throughout our constitutional history when the Supreme Court has seemed to depart from what had formerly been understood to be the meaning of the U.S. Constitution—for example, the *Dred Scott* case (1856), in which the Court decided that a freed black could not be regarded as a "citizen of the United States"; or in *Lochner* v. *New York* (1905), in which the Court decided that no state could dictate minimum-wage and maximum-hours laws for its laborers—but never before had there been anything to match the activities of the Warren Court.

Prompted by the new chief justice and his fellow Eisenhower appointee William Brennan (Ike said that he had made only two mistakes as President, and they were both sitting on the Supreme Court), the Court overturned many decades of practices in the states regarding matters of educational policy, criminal procedure, legislative apportionment, and school prayer and Bible reading, to name just a few areas in which the justices, finding new ways of interpreting the 14th Amendment's guarantee of equal protection and the provisions of the Bill of Rights, threw out state legislation and municipal ordinances. Led by a politician who cared little for legal niceties but who felt passionately that constitutional law should turn on what he believed to be "fair," the Warren Court embraced a jurisprudence of idealism that had little to do with law as it had been formerly understood. Suddenly, we had what Raoul Berger called "Government by Judiciary."

The first and probably still the greatest work on the meaning of the Constitution, Alexander Hamilton's, James Madison's, and John Jay's *Federalist*, had made clear, in number 78, that the justices possessed the power of judicial review—the power to examine whether the federal legislature had gone beyond the bounds permitted by the Constitution, and to nullify legislation that had exceeded those bounds—but that power was justified pursuant to the only acceptable premise of government for the late-18th-century Framers of the Constitution: the sovereignty of the people. The theory was that the people had expressed their will in the Constitution itself and that, when the justices declared a statute or an ordinance unconstitutional, they were simply following the will of the people. The justices were to be the agents of the people, not their masters. They were to serve popular sovereignty, not to interfere with it. The critics of the new Constitution—who felt that it wrongly circumscribed the power of the states and created a federal government that could become overweening—feared especially the power of a judiciary that might exercise will rather than judgment, but Hamilton's *Federalist* 78 turned this argument on its head by arguing that the justices would be bound by what the people themselves had decided.

Hamilton's claim, of course, only made sense if the Constitution had a fixed and clear meaning and left no discretion for judges. More interesting, and perhaps more problematic, was Hamilton's, Madison's, and Jay's idea that the Constitution itself was structured so that, once the people had expressed their will in their Constitution, no branch was supposed to be able to perform in a manner that contradicted that expressed will of the people, and that, in particular, the Constitution was designed to rebuff or withstand temporary disturbances among the people. There was, then, some tension between the Constitution's justification as a manifestation of popular sovereignty and its tendency to restrain the excesses of democratic legislatures. To put it bluntly, the Constitution, insofar as it restrained the acts of the people's legislature, ostensibly in service to the ultimate sovereignty of the whole people, was an antidemocratic document, and so, for that matter, was the power of judicial review when it was exercised to overturn acts of the "agents of the people."

One way of explaining this apparent paradox is to understand that the government the people had ordained in 1789 was, of course, not a democracy at all but a republic. Just what a republic is was a subject of passionate debate among the founding generation, as it had been for hundreds, if not thousands, of years. The Latin derivation *res publica* meant, literally, "public thing," and the essence of republican government was that it served the interests of all, not just those of a faction; a good republican citizen was one who understood that it was his job to put the common interest above his own, which is not always an easy task. Good republicans possessed "virtue," an ability to serve the interests of the commonwealth altruistically. The challenge for republican governments was to come up with an enduring government that promoted such disinterested public service. Classical republics had a tendency to succumb to corruption when they were captured by a selfish monarch, a venal aristocracy, or a self-indulgent popular party. It was widely understood, however, that an essential element in avoiding such capture was adherence to the rule of law, and the law was, at the time of the Framers, conceived of not just as the pronouncements of legislatures or executives or even

---

Stephen B. Presser is the Raoul Berger Professor of Legal History at Northwestern University School of Law and the legal-affairs editor for Chronicles.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

judges but a body of God-given principles that transcended the temporal order. Included among those were the following principles: Nothing could be made a crime that was not so when the act in question was committed; A's property should not be taken from A and given to B; and no person should be judge and party in his own case. These basic principles were derived from English common law.

The idea of the rule of law, and of these transcendent principles of republican government—notions thought to be accepted by the people acting as sovereign when they ratified the Constitution—justified the courts in rejecting legislative acts when they went beyond what the Constitution permitted. Thus, while we embraced popular sovereignty, we understood that acts of Congress might have to be rejected if they threatened the republicanism enshrined in the Constitution. Some disagreement lingered about what "republicanism" entailed. For Rousseau, for example, a republic was simply another name for a government where the rule of law prevailed. Thomas Jefferson eventually embraced the notion that the best republics are actually the closest to democracy; as in many other areas, however, Jefferson was something of an oddity at the time of the founding. Finally, American ideas of republicanism borrowed from Montesquieu the notion that no republic, or any other government, could be truly free or could truly be understood as following the rule of law if the powers of judging were not separate from those of legislating.

Considering that the U.S. Supreme Court has carried on an orgy of legislating since the time of the Warren Court, it is not difficult to understand why many have wondered if the whole idea of judicial review is inherently undemocratic and ought to be scrapped. The Warren Court and the Burger Court that followed it—which believed that they could decide, contrary to the original understanding of the Constitution, that the states ought not to be the primary authorities for determining domestic policies regarding education, morality, criminal law, religion, contraception, abortion, and legislative apportionment and the exercise of the franchise—could not be trusted to implement the rule of law or republicanism as the Framers understood them.

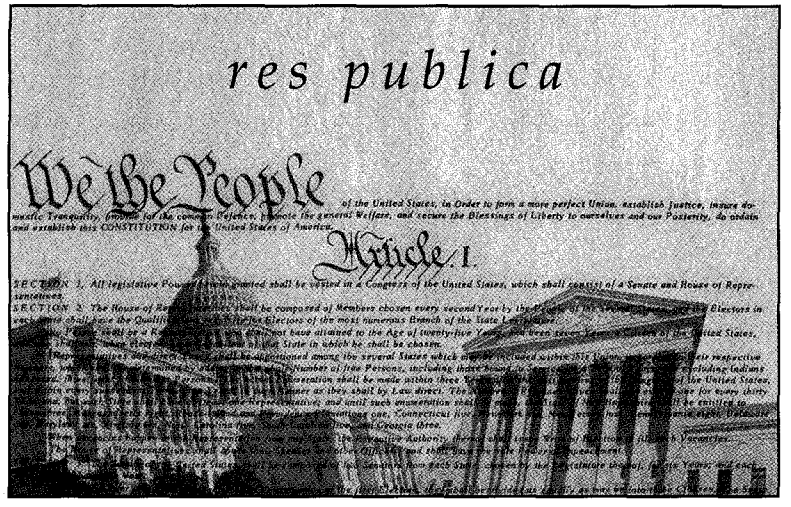
Occasionally, the Supreme Court realizes what it is supposed to be doing and reasserts its role as a republican check on democratic excesses. This occurs, in particular, when the Court implements what we now call "federalism," the idea that the states are the primary legislators in our system, and, as the Tenth Amendment provides, that the federal government ought to be one of limited and enumerated powers. This does not happen nearly as frequently as it should, and, worse, in many cases based on the 14th Amendment's Incorporation Doctrine, what the Court has done flies in the face of federalism. Beginning in the 20th century, many decades after the passage of the 14th Amendment, the Court began to declare, for example, that the First Amendment's provision that "Congress" shall make no laws infringing the freedoms of speech, press, or assembly, regarding an establishment of religion, or interfering with the free exercise of religion ought to be read as if the word *Congress* also meant "state or local governments." Despite there being little if any historical evidence to support this reading, the Supreme Court has used the Incorporation Doctrine to expand the reach of the federal courts into areas originally believed to be the sacrosanct preserve of the states and localities. Indeed, it is ironic that the Bill of Rights, passed to satisfy those who were deeply worried about an overweening federal government, should now be used as a club to beat the very state governments it was designed to protect.

Considering that the Supreme Court has carried on an orgy of legislating since the time of the Warren Court, it is not difficult to understand why many have wondered if judicial review is inherently undemocratic. The Warren Court could not be trusted to implement the rule of law or republicanism as the Framers understood them.

Happily, in the last few years of the 20th century, the Court, for the first time since the New Deal, began to restrict the legislative power of Congress in a manner that came closer to the original meaning of the Commerce Clause, which authorizes the U.S. Congress to regulate commerce among the states and with foreign governments. In *United States* v. *Lopez* (1995), the Court declared that this did not justify the passage of the Gun-Free School Zones Act, which made it a federal crime to carry an unauthorized firearm within 1,000 feet of any school in the country. The Commerce Clause argument had been that the threat posed by firearms might inhibit the educational task of the schools, which might reduce learning among the pupils, which might result in less commercial production. Four members of the Court embraced that argument, but five justices understood that, if it were valid, nothing would be immune to federal regulation. A similar determination was made a few years later, in *United States* v. *Morrison* (2000), when the Court threw out portions of the Violence Against Women Act, which had made it a federal crime to commit violent acts against women, an area traditionally reserved to the state criminal-justice systems. Since these two federal statutes were politically popular measures, these decisions might be regarded as the Court checking democracy, but they are probably better understood as the Court preserving the original constitutional scheme of a divided sovereignty and only a limited delegation to the federal government.

A third recent case, *Bush* v. *Gore* (2000), in which the Supreme Court, in effect, made George W. Bush the President, illustrates how the Court occasionally does implement the rule of law even in a politically perilous context. Here, the problem was not a legislature exceeding the bounds of the Constitution but, rather, a state supreme court bent on ignoring the rule of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



law itself. George W. Bush had been declared the winner of Florida's Electoral College votes by the Florida election officials, but Vice President Gore challenged that determination in the Florida courts. The lower Florida courts rejected that challenge as groundless, but the Florida Supreme Court overruled them, ordered a recount, and, in the process, ignored the Florida statutes that not only gave the Florida election officials discretion to make the relevant determinations but set strict time limits (which had been exceeded) for challenges.

Seven justices of the U.S. Supreme Court voted to overturn the Florida Supreme Court on the grounds that, by permitting the recount Gore had sought—which would have only included areas of the state traditionally favorable to Democrats—the Florida Supreme Court violated the Equal Protection Clause. This dubious argument could be invoked to invalidate many, if not most, elections in the country, but the Court sought to limit its holding to the case at hand. This does not sound much like the rule of law; there was, however, a concurring opinion in the case, joined in by Justices Rehnquist, Thomas, and Scalia, which essentially suggested that the Florida Supreme Court had deprived the Florida voters of due process by changing the election laws after the fact, thus nullifying their votes. Such a change in the law after the fact is, of course, the essence of a denial of republican government and an affront to the rule of law. Remarkably, a majority of the Supreme Court was not willing publicly to embrace that view, but that concurring opinion in *Bush* v. *Gore* was one of the clearest expressions of the idea that judges are supposed to follow the law and not legislate to promulgate policies (or, in this case, promote a candidate) that they favor.

Unfortunately, such ringing endorsements of republicanism, the rule of law, and the ultimate affirmation of popular sovereignty remain the exception rather than the rule among Supreme Court justices. It was characteristic of retiring Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, for example, that she conceived of the judicial task as one of choosing among a list of possible social policies instead of understanding that those choices had actually been dictated by the people in the Constitution. Now that O'Connor has retired and been replaced by Samuel Alito, a man apparently committed to federalism, originalism, the rule of law, and, one hopes, republicanism as understood by the Framers, there is, at last, a chance that the Court will finally move in a direction different from that of the Warren Court, and the legitimacy problem will, once again, diminish. ◈

Revival
by Peter Dalton

From Memphis, beating up the Mississippi
halfway toward St. Louis, Thebes slides by.
Just another small town off to starboard
where people farm, floods come, and cattle die.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Democracy: The Enlightened Way

The Your-Fault Society

by Claude Polin

Melanie Anderson

Before American readers embark on this inquiry into the particular democracy that was born in France with the French Revolution, I should warn them that they had better be prepared to enter a world of ideas so removed from reality as to make it almost impossible to believe there were people who actually took those ideas as principles for action.

I fail to see the reasons for the special prestige that the French system has enjoyed over the past two centuries—unless it is that, being derived from Jean-Jacques Rousseau's oneiric vaticinations, it happens at the same time to embody the pure essence of democracy, what democracy is when taken to its logical extremes. In which case, what follows may be understood as a warning to reflective—and pragmatic—minds and to other nations.

There are two entirely different types of Frenchmen. There are still a few descendants of the generally civilized people that one could not infrequently meet in most places, before the great leveling was finally completed. These people used to know how to read and write, speak proper French; have elementary manners, reverence for learning; and were still capable of ideas and beliefs.

And then there are the French this article is about, the sons of the French Revolution, heirs to the frenzied levelers who went hammering at the past of France and the sculptures of her churches, much as the saintly Taliban disposed of the centuries-old Buddhas carved out of their mountainside. These are the ones I intend to describe, not only because, beyond a certain level, human stupidity and wickedness becomes fascinating but, sadly enough, because they and their ideas are more and more obviously the dominant force dooming French history to an unhappy ending.

Corresponding editor Claude Polin is a professor at the University of Paris-Sorbonne.

They hate old France with such a consuming hatred that what they have always had in mind has been nothing short of starting history anew (initiating a *novus ordo seculorum*) and, specifically, generating an entirely new type of Frenchman. "Considering the extreme degradation to which the vices of our old social system have reduced mankind, I consider it necessary to proceed with a complete regeneration, and, so to speak, create the French people anew." So said, in 1792, Lepeletier de Saint Fargeau, a representative in the National Assembly, presenting a proposal for a general reform of the French educational system.

One has to weigh the words: They convey at least two meanings, the intrinsic idiocy of which has never seemed to dawn upon the many, nor weakened the words' allure.

They amount, first, to the new French—the progress-minded ones who think tomorrow will always be brighter than today—declaring a perpetual war on the traditional French, who are deemed to be custom-obsessed and fearful of any change. Where the good and the bad ones stand is obvious: On one side are generous men, anxious to provide a better fate for mankind; on the other side, the selfish ones, entrenched in their acquired privileges. A fight to the death is on between the virtues of the future and the vices of the past. To understand the political situation of France, one must realize that the country has been in a state of civil war, raging hot and cold but always rampant, ever since the French Revolution. (One might even claim that two wars have been waged at the same time, though with the same purpose: a general one between progress and conservatism, and another one within the ranks of the new French, between the moderates who want slow change and the radicals who always want everything to change overnight.)

A second thing is readily apparent in the spontaneous choice of words by our unwittingly profound reformer: He does not want to create, he wants to create *anew*; his ambition is not to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

devise some extraordinary new being, but simply to *regenerate* man—*i.e.*, to allow him to be again what he used to be when he first appeared on earth and, so to speak, for him to be born again. A wise man, Mr. Lepeletier does not wish to play God; he simply wants mankind in general, beginning with Frenchmen, to revert to their *natural* selves. The reader is probably acquainted with what became the battle cry of the Enlightenment, but you must realize that our illuminated gentlemen could not actually have cared less about what man's nature might be. Whereas the pagans and the Christians both maintained that man had to strive to *discover* and *accomplish* his own nature, that he had to *understand* and *become* what he is by nature (this is what education is all about), our enlightened reasoners claimed all that was nonsensical gibberish, man's nature being very simply and without further ado what he happens to be at any given time of his life. (Not surprisingly, ever since the 16th century, the French intelligentsia have been growing more and more forceful in their demand that education be essentially self-education, meaning zero education. Their success is now almost complete in France.)

If democracy means the sovereignty of the people, it means each member of the people has a sovereign right to be whatever he may be, and it eventually ends up meaning that there should be no discrepancy between the will of each citizen and the will of the sovereign (which is what Rousseau called the general will).

The idea (and its philosophical background) may best be understood in theological terms. For the pagans, the passions of man were always conspiring against his nature as part of the cosmos; for Christians, man's liberty amounted to his ability to go against his nature as a son of God. Now, if this sort of theological approach is invalidated on principle, there is indeed no reason why man should be a fallible creature, and the individual has nothing else to do or be than what he feels like doing or being. It is enough that he feel an inclination toward something for this inclination to be considered natural. It should come as no surprise that what may be called the scientific outlook on mankind has since prevailed over the moral one: Man is like a stone on a slope; he can be understood as a mobile entity whose only purpose is to keep going without any particular goal, because movement itself is his nature. What is truly fascinating is how easily the metaphysical idea translates into ordinary behavior: Always follow your impulses, as they cannot but be natural; do whatever you like, because it is natural. (Wouldn't you think you are listening to homosexual propaganda?) And since there is no criterion outside of nature that can be used to judge nature itself, whatever is natural is good. In other words, you have a natural right to be whatever you are.

This is precisely the gist of the ideas that eventually resulted, with the help of the Revolution, in the French conception of democracy. Unbelievably (at least if you have not taken leave of your senses), this childish principle has been the sun blazing the path of the French Enlightenment, from its inception in the 16th century to its triumph in 1789. At the beginning was the famous Montaigne boasting that it is a divine gift to be able to enjoy oneself, whatever one is. (Thus, he devotes 800 pages to blabbering about himself, the topics ranging from his interest in Plato to the variety of foods that are liable to make him vomit.) At the other end, Rousseau, the herald of those times and the scourge of ours, proclaims the love of oneself as the primary and most natural impulse of man, so much so that he is naturally wary of the company of others and lives most happily when alone: Man is "a perfect and solitary whole." Everyone knows that God thought His work good, but that is nothing compared to what the individual should think of himself: I thank God, says Rousseau, for what He has done, "but I don't pray to Him." Why should he, indeed, since there is nothing beyond what he is that he could dream of being?

This intense satisfaction with the self seems (blatantly, as I see it) to permeate the famous *Déclaration des Droits de l'Homme*, which, far from being some kind of fantasy, is actually the cornerstone of the dozen or so definitive constitutions France has managed to frame for herself in the past two centuries. Let us consider the first and most famous article: Men are born free and equal. Now, if freedom is freedom from need, this phrase is just plain stupid. If freedom is an ability to act reasonably without being enslaved to impulses, prejudices, ignorance, or passions, the phrase remains just as idiotic: It does not make sense to claim that, at the very instant he utters his first cry, the baby is endowed with a real ability to decide what is best for himself and does not need to be educated, except by himself—which, nevertheless, is exactly Rousseau's thesis in his *Emile*. Whatever one may think of his disciples, it is hard to believe they were that foolish. We are therefore left with the only plausible meaning of the sacred motto: that men have an absolute right to be as they are or as it pleases them to be, and any idea that might hint they ought to be otherwise, on whatever grounds they can imagine, is perfectly spurious. As of 1789, modern Frenchmen have come to assume that their very nature forbids men to feel bound by any kind of duty, law, principle, or affection that would imply they could be better off than they are, whether intellectually, morally, socially, politically, or spiritually. So you do not teach in France any more; you try to be pleasant with a student, who is supposed to teach himself. Whether one marries cows instead of women, prefers chocolate to fish, worships eggs instead of gods, or ranks Gore Vidal over Plato is one's absolute right: The true nature of man is to have no nature but that of his choice. To enjoy himself as if he were born without parents and were to die

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

without descendants is the ideal of the modern Frenchman. Is this the dream of a deranged mind? Probably, but it is, all the same, a basic principle of the present French constitution, which forbids discrimination of any kind among citizens. This is an ominous proscription: Let us remember that, according to the arch-enlightened Babeuf, "intelligence" is supposedly "a matter of opinion . . . accepted . . . because the clever ones have managed to impose it . . . though actually but a license to exploit the less clever." Which is why primitive ideologies, stupid ideas, and inane intellectual fads are so powerful among people who so willingly boast about their intelligence. Frenchmen love them, because these various conceptions speak the language of their primal passion: Let us not have rules to follow, enemies to fight, values to respect; let relativity reign, lest there be some criterion of behavior or thought. As one could read on the walls in 1968, "It is forbidden to forbid," or, "Question authority." The French have entered, as of July 14, 1789, a new era: the *me era.* ("I'm certainly worth it," says the perfume ad.)

The overwhelming primacy of the *me principle* since the 18th century has branded the French idea of democracy. Not surprisingly, this principle has become the very reason for the unique worth of a regime that can so easily appear as tailor-made to embody it. What, indeed, is democracy if not a regime in which the citizens (the people) are sovereign? Rousseau phrased it very nicely, but he was only expressing the spirit of the times: Democracy, he wrote, is a society in which "everyone unites with everyone else, but obeys only himself and remains just as free as he was before" (*i.e.*, before he entered this society). It is difficult to overestimate the impact of such words. Ever since the summer of 1792, when the decision to assassinate the king had finally matured, the goal has been set (which is the trademark of French democracy): If democracy means the sovereignty of the people, it means each member of the people has a sovereign right to be whatever he may be, and it eventually ends up meaning that there should be no discrepancy between the will of each citizen and the will of the sovereign (which is what Rousseau called the general will). In other words, democracy becomes a regime in which nothing can be more offensive than monarchy, because it is a regime in which every citizen, to the last, is actually a king in his own right. Even though the heirs of the Revolution have not always been absolutely aware of their own inner expectations, they have all been more or less explicitly dreaming of the day when their dream would come true and that marvelous society would be fully implemented which allows every citizen to live an absolutely unfettered life.

The improbability of the whole scheme has never seemed to matter: It is as if the very impossibility of drawing a circle that could be squared only resulted in grown men demanding increasingly that it be drawn. This is probably why a revolution or riot has taken place in France at the steady rhythm of every 15 to 20 years over the past two centuries (save for a respite during World War I). Short of actually turning everyone into a king, the fight for ever more democracy in France has been simply a fight for ever more rights for the individual (which easily translates into a struggle for more equality). After the struggle for universal suffrage came, in the 19th century, the war for freedom of religion (which amounted to a right to tailor-made beliefs), while, during most of the 20th century, there was a fight for a growing share of the collective pie, and today takes place the final battle for the right to paid leisure, anarchic private life, and, generally speaking, an absence of any societal bond or duty. Above and beyond Rousseau's hopes (for he finally confessed democracy to be "only for gods"), his program is being slowly implemented and, of course, in the most grotesque way, since there is no other way to do it.

Since there is no legitimate authority but every citizen's own, it is only natural that he more or less consciously try to see the top man's will as a reflection of his own particular will. Robespierre and De Gaulle understood perfectly that the rule of the game is to incarnate the quintessential citizen.

Before we proceed any further, it must be realized that the democratic coin has a flip side in France, and the *me principle* a twin, which is the *your-fault principle*. Let us put ourselves in the shoes of an enlightened man (admittedly a rather undignified endeavor). From the right to be as one is inclined to be, does there follow the right to be a thief or a scoundrel (as Spinoza did not hesitate to say)? It is impossible to answer yes without either condoning murder (Sade did, but, strangely enough, revolutionaries were not enthusiastic) or destroying the creed that men's rights are vindicated by the very fact that they are natural (and reverting to the supposedly outrageous notion that man is a sinful creature). So there lies the rub, and there is even more to it. For if the nature of a man is what he does or is—*i.e.*, what he cannot help but be or do (precisely because that is the way he is made)—and if he is good by nature, then there is no way he can be bad, because that would mean having a nature and not having that nature, being and, at the same time, not being what he is. The Stoic vision (there is no evil when you consider the whole) being hardly agreeable to the individualistic spirit of the Enlightenment, the only way out appeared to be a very simple tautology: If nothing is wrong with man, but man can nevertheless be evil, then, obviously, it must be because there is something that *prevents* him from being what he is or *forces* him to be something he is not. The enlightened Parisian clubs erupted with enthusiasm: *Eurekas* were heard all over the place. Is it not obvious that a man has to become mean when in shackles, and a thief when hungry! Remove oppression, poverty, humiliation, or whatever, and, as a river artificially forced out of its bed reverts to it when the dams break, man will run again his natural course. The notion started as a rivulet and ended as a flood. Liberals, romantics,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

socialists, even modern Catholics baptized again with the new ointment sang in unison the praise of the second great principle of the French Revolution: the *your-fault principle*. Democracy becomes revolutionary *in essence*, an endless revolution, because it consists basically in shattering everything that stands in the way of the individual, by means of science (whose goal is to enslave nature for the benefit of mankind's whims), on one hand, and, on the other, politics, which will erase all the differences that deprive the nonprivileged of their humanity and turn them into beasts. Democracy is like a bulldozer out of control whose first function is to demolish. History demonstrates the lasting impact of the idea. The Russian nihilists of the 19th century, who wanted to "go full steam through the mud," clearly reflect it. So does the whole of Marxism, for what is Marxism, in a nutshell, if not a lengthy development of this elementary principle: *If I am what I am* (*e.g.*, a wretched proletarian, bereft of anything human except sheer humanity), *then it is your fault, you vampires living off my blood who have taken so many forms over the centuries* (the last one being the bourgeois form)?

Contrary to general opinion, anarchic freedom fertilizes neither thinking nor artistic creation. Enlightened democracy has increasingly translated into a complacency toward oneself, which more and more effectively prohibits the birth of inspired works.

The identification of the *your-fault principle* helps shed a new light on the well-known and badly misunderstood concept of progress. Everyone knows it to be the guiding beacon of that Century of Light. From Fontenelle to Condorcet, through the Encyclopaedists and whoever else had a name, there is not a single fashionable voice to deny that mankind is on the path of indefinite progress, and even Rousseau decides that man is a perfectible being. Now, this should have raised a few eyebrows. For again, if man is good by nature, how can he get better than good? Far from meaning, therefore, that men can improve on what they already are (which is the Christian idea that men must actualize their essence), the idea of progress as conceived by the French Enlightenment very simply means that man is an animal unlike the others: He need not *adapt* to his environment and change himself to survive but is able to *adapt his environment* to what he is, so that he may keep being what he already is and still survive. In other words, the goodness of man has two enemies: untamed natural forces and human (or inhuman) monsters. Progress is therefore very simply a two-pronged offensive against the natural harshness of physical nature and the artificial deformities of moral nature.

The *me principle* and the *your-fault principle* are the bases on which was built the rather outlandish system the French have lived in since 1789. To remain within reasonable limits, let us choose only four examples of what it has become.

Is there a tourist who has spent a few days in Paris without being exposed to the charms of a strike, or the dubious harmony of some street demonstrators shouting their demands? Very unlikely, because it is a structural habit. No governmental decision can be absolutely satisfactory to all citizens. But each citizen has the constitutive right to be satisfied by his government, since it is his own, so an unsatisfactory government must be illegitimate. Now, is there another way to fight illegitimacy than by force? So any move by the government that may be unpopular to somebody becomes just an opportunity to take to the streets. Even if the demonstrators have previously elected this government, it is not their government anymore but a tyrannical one, since its will and theirs no longer coincide. This is a cause of troubles that goes far deeper than any that the professional rabble-rousers, such as the shady ultraleft, can devise. And what does the dissenting citizen care about this government having been elected by his fellow citizens, since he himself is supposed to be the real sovereign? What right does one citizen possess that another does not? On what grounds does one take precedence over another? In good French democratic logic, even the majority does not have any such right, because a majority may have more votes, which means more brute force, but not more legitimacy. At best, and purely for the sake of pragmatism, the majority may be given the power to decide, but only for want of a better way to determine who should have it, and never as an entrenched right. (According to Rousseau, under certain circumstances that remain, at best, unclear, the majority may be assumed to represent not sheer numbers but the "general will," the will that all citizens *ought to have*.) No wonder that, in any post-election discussion, it is standard behavior for French politicians—and, most of all, the defeated ones—to claim they represent the *real* majority. No wonder, either, that, in France, all political parties claim to serve the public interest. No wonder that, in France, the street is always right in their opposition to the political establishment. No wonder that French Jacobin-style democracy is just another word for anarchy: What else could it be, if it is the acknowledged privilege of every citizen to be an absolute sovereign?

French enlightened democracy, however, is not anarchy, pure and simple. The latter combines in an almost unique way with what has to be identified as a despotism of a most pernicious nature, because it appeals to the multitude, who see it as the very means of their freedom.

A tyranny may be defined as a political regime in which one man (or, conceivably, a few) possesses virtually all possible powers and wields them alone (or with the help of his mercenaries); is in no way bound by any law or any standing norm of any kind (except perhaps those of sheer immediate rationality); uses these powers for his own benefit (or his followers'), regardless of his subjects' interests; and relies on fear as his most efficient means of leverage. It is rather ironic to realize that the four features of this archvillain of a regime very obviously and precisely apply to the regime the French call de-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

mocracy. Again, the residual strength of the prerevolutionary past of France has delayed the actual blossoming of democracy in its purest form; its time has come, however, or so it may be argued. Let me explain.

It is difficult to overestimate the extent and the scope of power that has been monopolized by politicians and bureaucrats, who are supposed to be mere representatives of the people and curators of their will, and who do not hesitate to wield this power against some of their fellow citizens. The fact has a very visible root: the *me principle*. For, once more, what is democracy if not a regime in which the citizen is supposed to be sovereign? Hence, his natural propensity to identify himself with those who hold public power. That he is continually disappointed, and sooner or later comes to hate what he used to adore, should not hide what is an essentially logical leaning: Since there is no legitimate authority but every citizen's own, it is only natural that he more or less consciously try to see the top man's will as a reflection of his own particular will. Robespierre and De Gaulle seem to have understood perfectly that the rule of the game is, so to speak, to incarnate the quintessential citizen. The famous expression, the "cult of personality," is misleading: The citizen loves a particular individual all the more as the latter seems to him to be a glorified version of his own self. Hence, he will tolerate any display of power, even arbitrary, for as long as he can identify with whoever holds it.

Thus the following paradox. In France, the majority may be considered just as entitled to wield a totally despotic power as unfit to wield any legitimate one. It depends on the number of egos that see it as an expression of their own personal desires. In other words, the majority has no right because the individual has every conceivable one. At the same time, however, only the majority has any right at all, because it is supposed to represent the will of each citizen. Anarchy and tyranny are opposite sides of the same coin.

Even more disturbing is the scope the true democrats are prepared to allow political power to encompass. Laws have been passed, supposedly by the people through their representatives, regulating births (and probably deaths in the near future), property, opinion, individual safety—that is to say, the rights to live, to possess, to think, and to defend one's life, limb, and property when the public authority fails to do so, which are the basic freedoms whose defense is supposed to be the main purpose of modern French democracy. (Maybe the only freedom that is really left is to flee the country, provided you are willing to forfeit your means of support.) There is logic behind all of these constraints. If the sovereignty of the citizen is to be taken seriously, there cannot be anything standing in his way, provided it is his will to go that way. Now, let us consider things from the free and sovereign citizen's point of view. Why should a woman have to pay for a few moments of natural pleasure with a lifelong burden? Isn't taking care of one's elderly retired parents an endless bother as well as a financial strain on society? As for the small house one owns, is it reasonable for it to stand in the path of the highway others need in order to reach the seashore faster, and, all things considered, isn't one's ownership of a powerful SUV an infringement on another's peaceful enjoyment of his battered wreck? Finally, shouldn't some opinions be forcefully prohibited—such as, for instance, precisely the opinion that abortion should be prohibited? The French never had any qualms about being despotic: "No freedom for the enemies of freedom," shouted Robespierre in defense of political murder, whether performed on an individual or a nation. And Rousseau concurred: Whoever resists, said he, will have "to be forced to obey, which amounts to forcing him to be free." In other words, the more total the freedom for some, the more total the denial of freedom to others: To be absolutely free, the free citizen must have an absolute power. Since everyone wants absolute power, however, the rule of the game is that one have as much power over one's neighbor as that neighbor has over him. An absolute democracy—the one the French are after—must be an absolute tyranny, because it is an unprincipled constitution—that is to say, a *me-principled* constitution.

Democracy becomes revolutionary *in essence*, because it consists basically in shattering everything that stands in the way of the individual, by means of science (whose goal is to enslave nature for the benefit of mankind's whims) and politics, which will erase all the differences that deprive the nonprivileged of their humanity and turn them into beasts.

If tyranny is lawless power, then, again, that is what French democracy is. It is not that France lacks rules. According to the French conception of democracy, however, a law derives from nothing but the sovereign will of the people. The king was a tyrant when he dared sign the laws with the famous formula "because it is my will," but the people are not, when they claim whatever pleases them is the law, because, in good Rousseauian logic, the people's sovereignty means their will becomes the rule for no other reason than the fact that it is their will. Law is not the law because it is just, reasonable, or good; the law is just, reasonable, or good because it is the law. This means that the only legitimacy of the people's law lies in the sheer brute force of the collective will. One will argue: *Their will is the will of the many*. But what legitimacy is there in numbers *per se*, except that a majority possesses more brute force than a minority? Again, a blending of the *me principle* with the *your-fault principle* explains this interesting paradox: As long as the will of the majority supports a law, this law is supposed to be legitimate, but, at the same time, the minority has every right to consider that very same law as nothing but a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

constraint imposed by the sheer brute force of the majority, as if it were a tyrant's whimsical, arbitrary ruling.

The French legislature is in constant turmoil—almost 300 laws in 20 years (a new one every third week); laws that are haphazardly implemented; political parties promising to repeal old laws and pass new ones if they are elected. All that is logical. Any will that is not bound to any principle of reason or justice must be a changing will and, actually, just a whim. But then how could anyone have respect for a whim? How can there be any law when citizens are allowed today what yesterday entailed imprisonment or loss of life (abortion, for example, which is even reimbursed by the national health insurance) and, conversely, are punished today for something that was lawful yesterday? Some might argue: *France has a constitution.* Wrong: Today's is only the 13th or so in 200 years, and France is ready for a new one. Modern France does not perceive that laws are made for the sake of justice or for the punishment of obvious criminals. (What an antiquated notion!) In modern France, laws are made to punish those who dare dissent from the momentary alleged will of the people. Laws are not made to deter criminality; they are made to define it.

The idea of progress as conceived by the French Enlightenment very simply means that man is an animal unlike the others: He need not adapt to his environment and change himself to survive but is able to adapt his environment to what he is, so that he may keep being what he already is and still survive.

The same logic also explains why, in France, political power is mostly used for the benefit of those who wield it and those who help them obtain it, which is the standard behavior of the typical tyrant. The *me principle* is again at work. Behind the idea of social contract (basic to French democracy) lies a very simple question: Why would a man who thinks he is a world unto himself enter society if not because he finds some advantage in doing so? The French founding fathers explicitly rejected the ancient idea that man is by nature a social animal; the principle of their democracy is that men do not come together because they love being together but because they can get something out of one another. They do not love their neighbors; they need them, but that means they need to get something out of them. Hence, the unbroken string of scandals that have riddled the French Third, Fourth, and Fifth Republics, some of which have remained infamous (the Panama Canal, the Stavitsky affair, the Crédit Lyonnais). And French democrats have added a corollary to this principle: Since it is perfectly clear that every citizen is after his own interests, why shouldn't he maximize this interest when in a position of power? By what miracle would the democratic princes be the only citizens not entering society for their advantage? Hence political corruption, whether it be making public decisions for a moneyed profit or making them for getting votes, which means power and, eventually, wealth. In the United States, rich men enter politics. In France, men enter politics to get rich. The truth of French democracy is what used to be the essence of despotism.

This is all the more the case because not only corruption but fear, though lying low, is always lurking in the background of French political life. The revolutionaries were never sparing of their fellow citizens' blood: As of 1789, the former continually knifed, hanged, dismembered and ate, beheaded, shot, and assassinated the latter, one at a time or *en masse.* (They invented genocide, planned it, and experimented with it on the people of Vendée.) Now, there were many reasons for this lust for blood, but they were never as powerful as the political—or philosophical—one, the *your-fault principle.* Take any individual, endow him with rights—some definite, and most indeterminate (to freedom, for instance), that is to say, endow him implicitly with a right to everything—and in no time, since his rights can never be fully vindicated, this individual will feel frustrated, nay, angered. For these are his rights, of which he feels cheated. But there is no theft where there are no thieves. Thus, one may consider as the symbol of revolution the law that Robespierre passed in 1794, which was called the Law of Suspects, and which basically called for every citizen to spy on, denounce, and send to the scaffold every other one. For a thief, who mocks justice and law, must be worse than an enemy: He has, so says Rousseau, forfeited his right to be treated as a citizen, and even as a man. Man has always been capable of cruelty, but democratic cruelty is different, because its goal is the vindication of individual rights, because it is an act of justice, which is why it must be systematic, legal, legitimate cruelty. The true symbol of the French Republic is that of a regime based on fear: the guillotine, which is still in use inasmuch as physical beheading has been replaced by physical removal from social life, by fiscal amputation or moral entombment.

What kind of government may emerge from this mixture of anarchy and despotism? Obviously a brutal and cowardly one, arrogant and servile, pompous and undignified, according to the popularity it enjoys and, by the same token, generally a weak and short-lived one, for there is not one that can survive its promising the moon—and, of course, its failure to provide it.

The same two basic principles also have social, economic, and cultural consequences that deserve a few words before we conclude.

In 1789, the founding fathers of French democracy decided that new France had to be built upon a social compact. A citizen became a man who has rights. But having a right may mean two entirely different things and result from two entirely different underlying philosophies, even though the words be the same. For an American, a right is basically a permission that all citizens mutually grant one another to do certain things if they feel like it; it is a legal guarantee that a citizen will not

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

be punished if he does it. Now, if a person is given a right to do something, it may also be understood that he has a right to whatever his lawful activity is supposed to bring him—in other words, he possesses not only a right to his doing something but to the results of his doing it. By having a right to build a house, I understand that I have a right to a house—which obviously is a much more attractive right for people who do not care so much about striving for something as about acquiring it. And it is actually even more logical than it is attractive: What is a right to own something when one does not own anything? It is a meaningless, formal right and not a real one, as Marx very aptly put it (which made for his unending popularity). But before and after him, the point made by true French democrats has always been that, by becoming a citizen, each individual is supposed to be given an entitlement, a right to hold a constant claim upon society. This creed reflects the combined influence of the two basic principles. For if society is supposed to be indebted to the individual, this debt can only be enhanced by the beneficiary being all too willing to consider himself a victim every time his expectations are not met. So, all in all, it is logical that France has become a natural haven for all the unhappiness in the world, and particularly for the self-proclaimed unhappy ones, for the fraudulently unhappy who think it is easier to complain than to strive. In other words, socialism has revealed itself as the truth—the hidden face—of French democracy. A good democrat is somebody who considers work degrading or meaningless, an activity that could disappear if society were better organized (notably through a better distribution of wealth); somebody who expects to be taken care of and whose true vocation is to remain a lifelong child; a voter always willing to accuse his timorous princes of never being bent on enough equality; a parasite claiming as his due what he is convinced to be possessed unfairly by the rich and demanding that it be extracted by taxation from the coffers of the better off. The latest stroke of socialist genius is to provide every 18-year-old in France with an automatic subsistence allowance, regardless of what he does. It would be hard to devise a quicker way to economic decay.

The moral decay is just as obvious and equally logical. The French government's reaction to the November 2005 riots was, at best, weak, while the enlightened citizenry was, if anything, less than supportive of any reaction at all. No wonder. How could a *me democracy* and a *your-fault democracy* not have torn public spirit to shreds? This may come as a surprise to anyone reminiscing about the patriotism that seems to have been so obvious during the great Napoleonic wars against Europe and, again, in the spirit of revenge against Germany, apparently so powerful between 1870 and 1914. Nevertheless, it remains to be proved, first, that French patriotism has not been, when existing, the legacy of a millennium of collective history, a memory that could not die overnight; and, second, that it is possible to escape this demonstrable truth: There cannot exist any civic loyalty in a political system whose avowed purpose is, for all citizens, the private advantage each of them can derive from it. There can be no patriotism in the heart of a man who becomes a citizen, because a citizen is a man with rights; nobody can feel any political obligation to a country that is essentially a welfare system: Who could feel a duty toward his insurance company? At the most, one may care for the cow one milks, but he will certainly not respect it—and it would be so much more convenient if the cow could take care of itself. In a city where there is no god but the individual himself, one can rest assured that the individual is the only god he is prepared to love. It is therefore a city where there can be no loyalty, nor honor, nor courage, nor any will to defend something that is nothing but a sum of heterogeneous interests: In case of danger, the natural propensity will be not to look too far ahead, nor to any general interests, but to make private deals. In case of an invasion, God help the country! And, actually, isn't this what France is today—an invaded country unwilling to survive? Where there are only rights, there is no duty; and when there is no duty, there is no society. There will be other riots in France; I do not know of any country in greater need of a miracle.

This moral climate has an interesting spillover: intellectual decay. Contrary to general opinion, anarchic freedom (the *me principle*) fertilizes neither thinking nor artistic creation. Enlightened democracy has increasingly translated into a complacency toward oneself, which more and more effectively prohibits the birth of inspired works. In France, 1968 was no playful revolution; it very efficiently destroyed all standards of thought and artistic creation, paving the way for a culture that prides itself on extolling pure liberty—that is to say, having no truth to reveal, no beauty to attain, no good to enshrine. Hence, it came about that anything expressive of oneself could be deemed respectable, if not downright fascinating. Figurative art is now jeered at, interviews masquerade as creative writing, and we have reached a stage in which words replace ideas. On the whole, political anarchism has not generated great individualities but a sort of general vulgarity, while self-centeredness has bred a propensity for displaying oneself as if one were an object of interest. It has also nurtured an overwhelming preference for what does not require time or effort to assimilate, is immediately pleasing, and, most of all, does not threaten a self-satisfaction to which an encounter with something above average might prove fatal. All in all, French culture is reduced to what the aptly denominated mass media—particularly TV—think culture is. The *me democracy* has produced a natural conspiracy of the most mediocre, a cultural *mediocracy*, and it shows clearly in the dwindling numbers of Western foreigners coming to France to pursue their studies.

Among the many possible conclusions, I shall choose two. The democracy that the French derived from Rousseau's blueprint is a system that will devour its own children. It cannot know of any moderation, for it is a society avowedly geared to promising total satisfaction to the individual (in which he can remain as free as he was before entering the society). Barring a total transformation of man (which was Rousseau's and Lenin's idea), this inaccessible goal is but an irresistible enticement to boundless leftist demagoguery, on one hand, and wailing demands, on the other, as well as abjection on the whole. (Again, Rousseau knew this to be the case: He recommended beheading the duty-evading, debased citizens.) That France may not have seen the total epiphany of her democracy may be the only reason why she has not completely passed away.

Democracy, French style, is not only the product of the French Revolution but of a metaphysical revolution that has taken place in France and still fascinates all who feel victimized around the world. Democracy, French style, actually speaks the words of the archangel who holds all men in sway by promising them they will be like gods, and who teaches them to repeat after him: *Non serviam*. Apparently, many people have still not understood how deceitful the great liar can be. I am afraid this is a lesson that knows no borders. ◁▷

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A Government We Deserve

by H.A. Scott Trask

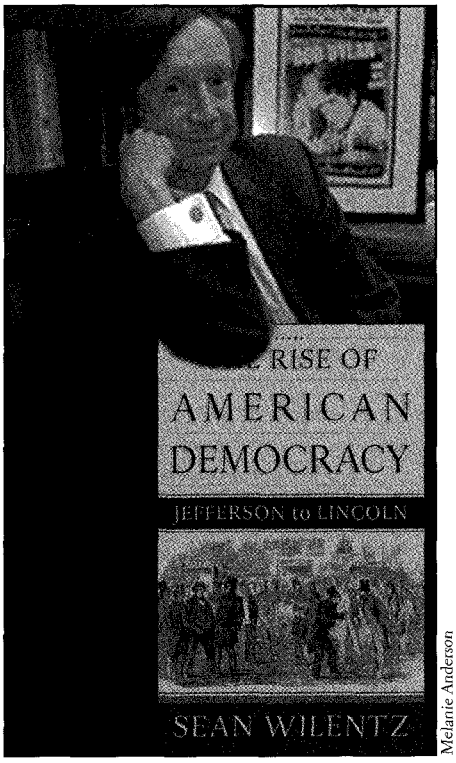
"A democracy, when put to the strain, grows weak and is supplanted by oligarchy."
—Aristotle

The Rise of American Democracy: Jefferson to Lincoln
by Sean Wilentz
New York: W.W. Norton;
1,004 pp., $35.00

◆

To write a book about democracy, a word that functions today as little more than an advertising slogan, an author should first define what it is that he is talking about, giving attention to the historical origins and development of that concept, what the best minds of the past have thought about it, and, above all, whether—however defined—it bears any relation to an observable reality. All this, Professor Wilentz fails to do.

By applying the Whig or progressive paradigm to American democracy, Wilentz obscures the fact that antebellum America was much more democratic than her postbellum or 20th-century incarnations, despite a more-restrictive suffrage. In 1800, although few citizens could vote directly for the presidency, they had a real choice before them. John Adams would have maintained the centralized, repressive, mercantilist state created by Alexander Hamilton. Jefferson released political prisoners, repealed all internal taxes, reduced the national debt by a third, and bought Louisiana from France. In 1832,



Melanie Anderson

the presidential election amounted to a referendum on whether to continue with a national bank: The majority voted for Jackson, and the bank went down. In 1836, the Democrats nominated Martin Van Buren, who espoused, in Wilentz's words, "some of the most radical economic doctrines of his day," and he won. The 1844 election was a national referendum on continental expansion: Clay opposed it; Polk wanted it. Polk won, and we got California. All this would become inconceivable later. In 1916, 1940, 1964, it did not matter for whom you were voting: You were voting for war. And since the 1930's, neither party has opposed the rule of money.

Early on, Wilentz fumbles around for a definition of *democracy*, finally suggesting that it "appears" when a

> large number of previously excluded, ordinary persons . . . secure the power not simply to select their governors but to oversee the institutions of government, as office holders and as citizens free to assemble and criticize those in office.

By this standard, vague as it is, American democracy was finished by the late 19th century. William Graham Sumner, the Yale historian and sociologist, did not hesitate to identify the United States as a plutocracy by the 1880's. Professor Wilentz is neither so bold nor so perceptive. Elsewhere in the Preface, he refers to "our own more elevated standards" (meaning universal suffrage), thus highlighting the problem at the heart of this work. As long as one regards unlimited suffrage as the most important attribute of democracy, he will never grasp how mass voting, by fostering the illusion of consent, masks oligarchic rule.

Democracy today is more a civil religion than a description of a type of government. Its sanctity, moreover, is sprinkled over everything the oligarchy regards as necessary, inevitable—and, hence, taboo for discussion. A writer in the *New Yorker* has recently explained that

> democracies preclude contending absolutisms and the dicta of fixed identities. They have to do with identity in flux, with culture, and cultures, constantly transforming, molting into something new—something surprising and different and open-ended and free.

That's multiculturalism, not democracy.

H.A. Scott Trask is the author of "Condy Raguet and the Northern Laissez-Faire, State-Rights Tradition," soon to be submitted for publication, and is at work on "Copperheads and Conservatives: The Northern Antiwar Movement, 1861-65."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Much of the same kind of conceptual confusion is to be found here. For instance, Wilentz regards the antebellum movement to disenfranchise free blacks in the North as a setback for democracy when it was actually an *expression* of democracy—more specifically, of the *herrenvolk* democracy that was the preference of an overwhelming majority of Americans, Northern as well as Southern. Wilentz is confusing categories. When a man native to the country who is otherwise entitled to vote is barred from the polls simply because of his race or color, it is an injustice; when it is done by popular acclaim, it is a democratic injustice. Similarly, Wilentz treats Northern abolitionism as a democratic movement, but that is to misconstrue the nature of the American government before 1861, which was confederated. It was up to the Southern state democracies to abolish slavery. On the other hand, the Northern states were acting democratically—even if unconstitutionally—when they passed laws to obstruct the enforcement in their states of the federal fugitive-slave laws of 1793 and 1850. Of course, that was an act of nullification in accordance with Jefferson's and John C. Calhoun's doctrine, which Wilentz opposes when it goes against a law he agrees with, such as the protective tariff. Wilentz twice names Calhoun as the author of the compact theory of the Union—an egregious error. (Jefferson and James Madison are responsible for it.)

That Wilentz's conception of democracy is ultimately results-driven is made clear in his dismissal of the Crittenden Compromise, which might have averted the war. Lincoln helped "kill the plan," believing that the "only just and legitimate way to settle the matter was through a deliberate democratic decision by the nation's citizenry." If he believed that, why did he oppose submitting the compromise to a nationwide popular referendum? Wilentz does not tell us, but congressional Democrats proposed doing just that, and the Republicans blocked the proposal.

Wilentz regards Andrew Jackson's vigorous and constitutionally questionable assertions of executive power as eminently democratic, even endorsing Jackson's theory of the presidential tribunate (the people's supreme representative and leader)—unaware, apparently, that he is endorsing caesarism, not democracy. Republican theorists from ancient to modern times have identified the assembly of citizens as the preeminent institution of a self-governing polity. Furthermore, Montesquieu insisted that power must be diffused in an extended republic in order to avoid oligarchic control. Jefferson agreed, upholding the states in his First Inaugural Address as "the surest bulwarks against antirepublican tendencies." But Wilentz omits this quotation, and one would never know from reading him that, before 1861, Americans believed they lived in a confederation. Nor does one learn that the author's democratic heroes—Jefferson and Jackson—regarded the doctrine of federal judicial review as incompatible with democratic government. If "absolute acquiescence in the decisions of the majority [is] the vital principle of republics" (Jefferson) and "the majority must govern" (Jackson), then how can unelected judges be allowed to strike down laws or issue their own in the form of judicial edicts? Wilentz has nothing to say on the subject, and it is clear that his only objection to *Dred Scott* (1857) is to the proslavery content of the result.

We may admire Professor Wilentz's erudition: ten years of writing; many more of reading; the mastery of a vast historiographical labyrinth of journal articles and monographs and books. He also writes well (ten times better than your average academic riddler). Wilentz is at his best when describing the coalition of city and country democrats that formed the backbone of the Jeffersonian Republicans and the Jacksonian Democrats. He is one of the few historians to get the Jacksonians right, pointing out that they sought not to liberate business from government but to liberate the government from the control of a grasping corporate plutocracy.

Wilentz loses his way about the time of the Mexican War, however, when his focus becomes so narrow that all he can perceive are the machinations of the "Slave Power" and the altruism of the growing Northern antislavery movement. He believes that, by 1848, two antagonistic forms of democracy—a Northern free-labor one and a Southern pro-slavery version—were contending for national mastery and that only one could survive. But this understanding of the history of the period is too simple. There were certainly Democrats who, resenting the increasing Southern domination of the party, bolted, but what of the Sewards and Giddings who embraced antislavery politics because they saw it as a means of weakening the majority Democrats and smuggling in their unpopular mercantilist agenda? And what of the Republicans who saw the war, once it came, as a means of crushing not only secession and states' rights but democracy as well?

If the Jacksonians have no modern heirs, their rivals, a coalition of evangelicals and businessmen-on-the-make, are the clear antecedents of the praying plutocrats of the Republican Party. The Whigs preached an early version of trickle-down economics: What was good for the rich was good for the poor, and never could their interests diverge. They also engaged in what we have come to know as liberal bashing: Democrats were socialists, libertines, drunkards, and generally "unrighteous." Whig journalist Horace Greeley could sound just like Ann Coulter: "Wherever you find a bitter, blasphemous Atheist and an enemy of Marriage, Morality, and Social Order, there you may be certain of one vote for Van Buren." The party of the "righteous" were also the authors of the first recognizably modern election, the famous Hard Cider and Log Cabin Campaign of 1840, which was utterly devoid of substance or seriousness but featured plenty of torchlight parades, barbecues, free bourbon whiskey, campaign songs, and bogus rhetoric. Eighty percent of the electorate turned out to vote, the highest percentage ever, and Van Buren, the friend of labor, was turned out. Genuine democrats were stunned and began to doubt whether the people were really capable of self-government when they could be so easily duped. The doubt remains. ◁

Visit the webpage of

Chilton Williamson, Jr.

at our website

www.ChroniclesMagazine.org

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Breaking Ranks

by Clark Stooksbury

Crunchy Cons: How Birkenstocked Burkeans, Gun-Loving Organic Gardeners, Evangelical Free-Range Farmers, Hip Homeschooling Mamas, Right-Wing Nature Lovers, and Their Diverse Tribe of Countercultural Conservatives Plan to Save America (or at Least the Republican Party)
by Rod Dreher
New York: Crown Forum;
259 pp., $24.00

◆

Rod Dreher's book labors under a few handicaps. First, there is the cloying title and absurdly long subtitle. In addition, the cover features a cutesy picture of a VW microbus with a GOP elephant painted above the grille. The back cover features a "Crunchy Con Manifesto" that is a bit simplistic. "We are conservatives who stand outside the conservative mainstream; therefore, we can see things that matter more clearly." However, the old adage about not judging a book by its cover applies here, because *Crunchy Cons* does merit serious attention.

The conservative movement, as currently constituted, can accomplish little more than elect Republicans, demonize Democrats and liberals, and turn execrable books by talk-radio hosts and syndicated columnists into best-sellers. Since politics has devolved into a team sport, many of the conservative rank and file are happy just to be "winning." In *Crunchy Cons*, Rod Dreher looks at the deeper issue of whether conservatives are accomplishing anything of value.

Dreher's cultural and political beliefs (he considers culture to be more important than politics) are informed by his Roman Catholicism. Specifically, many of the "crunchy" (if one must use the term) aspects of his beliefs are Catholic in origin. *Crunchy Cons* briefly retells the author's journey from his childhood Methodism to agnosticism and finally to Rome. "To the extent that I can be called conservative," Dreher writes, "it's because I want to conserve the wisdom and humane traditions taught and celebrated in Catholicism—*even if it puts me at odds with contemporary Republicans.*"

In his discussion of man's relationship with the natural world especially, Dreher demonstrates his willingness to stand at odds with contemporary Republicans. Goaded to reexamine his thinking by a reading of Matthew Scully's *Dominion*, Dreher recounts how the simple fact of a fellow political conservative (formerly a *National Review* staffer and Bush speechwriter) becoming a vegetarian and an opponent of factory farming forced him to rethink some issues for himself.

> It took about fifty pages of Matthew's book for me to realize how closed-minded and dishonest I, a conservative, had been about animal rights and the environment. How often had I sneered at environmentalists to hide the fact that I didn't really understand what they were talking about, and, more to the point, didn't want to?

I can sympathize with Dreher because, for much of my adult life, I thought exactly the same way. It is very easy to find reasons to dismiss facts and arguments offered by people on the other side. (Dreher, who is hard on his conservative allies, notes nevertheless that environmentalists are guilty of similar closed-mindedness in ignoring the genuine fears ordinary Americans have about losing their jobs to environmental regulation.)

In expressing his concerns about environmental destruction, Dreher even treads on thin ice to denounce right-wing indifference to global warming. Few beliefs are more sacred to the current *National Review* crowd than the notion that climate change is simply liberal propaganda, regardless of the near-unanimous views of climatologists and the physical evidence of sinking islands and thawing permafrost. Citing a lament by Jeffrey Hart, a senior editor at NR, over the willingness of some right-wingers to see the world made into a giant Hong Kong, Dreher notes that "in a world such conservatives are helping to bring about . . . Hong Kong will capsize under rising oceans."

Americans ignore the problem because, as President George H.W. Bush expressed it in 1992, "the American way of life is not negotiable." By the "American way of life," he meant our extraordinary levels of consumption and waste. Rod Dreher is not enamored of the American Way of Life, although he does not say so in so many words. After the attack on the World Trade Center, both Mayor Giuliani and President Bush encouraged Americans to go shopping. It would have been an ideal moment, Dreher suggests, for the President to call for a reduction in our consumption of energy, which does so much to fuel radical Islam—but no, there is the American Way of Life to consider, prompting what Dreher condemns as an appeal to the "crass spirit of the present age." Perhaps in an attempt not to sound hypocritical, Dreher notes that, while "we have all benefited enormously from America's economic progress," the "problem is the way we relate to our material gains." Americans have more and more stuff, yet "only a blind optimist would argue that we are a spiritually sound, morally strong, society of happy people."

Americans are inundated with entertainment. In the age of the iPod and cell phones, one need never be alone or bored. The elephant in the living room, however, is still the television set. Dreher, who lived in the wilderness for several months to decompress after working as a TV critic a few years back, observes that, while the typical conservative complaint about television pertains to smut or violence (Brent Bozell and the Media Research Center are still obsessed with Janet Jackson's nipple), the amount of time the idiot box consumes is a far more important concern.

> By its very nature, television technology teaches us to experience the world as a series of fragmentary images. . . . [I]f a law were passed tomorrow granting Michael Medved, William Bennett and Pope Benedict XVI the power to control all television programming, our essential dilemma would change not one bit.

Crunchy Cons, in part, tells how Rod Dreher came to look at issues for himself instead of simply consulting the Red State/Blue State manual. Along the way, he examines the thought process that keeps people in ideological boxes and encourages them to demonize their enemies, often on the basis of cultural tastes or on hatred. Here, he describes his feelings before the Iraq invasion:

> I remember the run-up to the Iraq War, listening to some conservatives arguing that there was no real evidence that Iraq threatened us, and besides, it's an arrogant fool's errand to set out to install a democracy in a country that has never known it. They made solid argu-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ments from conservative principle, but I didn't want to listen. I hated the Islamic terrorists who killed so many of our people on 9/11, and I hated the liberals who hated the war. *USA! USA! Let's roll!*

For his efforts, Dreher has earned the ire of many fellow conservatives—not surprisingly, as he is extremely critical of his former allies, although he includes himself as an object of criticism. *National Review Online* set up a blog to discuss the book. The blog saw frequent appearances by John Podhoretz, who dropped in to sneer when he wasn't accusing the other participants of being anti-American, and Jonah Goldberg, who cross-examined Dreher with a prosecutorial zeal. Maggie Gallagher, the marriage advocate, has posted an almost insultingly dismissive review.

Dreher is fortunate already to have left *National Review* for the *Dallas Morning News*. As Joseph Sobran and Bruce Bartlett could tell you, NR and the rest of the Movement Right are not especially hospitable these days to dissenters and independent thinkers in their midst.

Clark Stooksbury writes from Knoxville, Tennessee.

Government by Judiciary

by Gregory J. Sullivan

Becoming Justice Blackmun: Harry Blackmun's Supreme Court Journey
by Linda Greenhouse
New York: Times Books;
268 pp., $25.00

Sandra Day O'Connor: How the First Woman on the Supreme Court Became Its Most Influential Justice
by Joan Biskupic
New York: HarperCollins;
419 pp., $26.95

◆

The two most prominent newspaper journalists covering the U.S. Supreme Court have written biographies of two of the most prominent justices of our time. Predictably, Linda Greenhouse of the *New York Times*, who has written *Becoming Justice Blackmun: Harry Blackmun's Supreme Court Journey*, and Joan Biskupic of *USA Today*, who recently published *Sandra Day O'Connor: How the First Woman on the Supreme Court Became Its Most Influential Justice*, are enthusiastic cheerleaders for the liberal social engineering of these jurists. Predictably, too, Greenhouse and Biskupic, like the justices they lionize, care not at all about the original understanding of the Constitution. Their books offer sympathetic portraits of policymakers using the "living" Constitution to subvert the historical Constitution in order to impose their vision of the good society on America.

To be sure, Greenhouse and Biskupic know the contemporary Court well. They write of its current inner workings, personalities, and rituals with clarity and comprehensive knowledge. They know nothing, however, of constitutional history and interpretation. So long as the Court reaches results that comport with the secular-liberal worldview—particularly the feminist component of that worldview—then its decisions are, so far as Greenhouse and Biskupic are concerned, sound.

Greenhouse, who was given access to all of Justice Blackmun's papers by his family, covers a number of cases in which Blackmun, a Nixon appointee, was a central figure. The most notorious one is, of course, *Roe* v. *Wade* (1973). With this case and its companion, *Doe* v. *Bolton*, the Court, through Blackmun's opinions, essentially constitutionalized abortion-on-demand as national policy. What remains noteworthy about *Roe* is its fundamental lawlessness. In the portion of the *Roe* opinion that attempts to construct a constitutional foundation, Blackmun's discussion of the fictive constitutional right to privacy culminates in this cloud of ambiguity:

> This right of privacy, whether it be founded in the Fourteenth Amendment's concept of personal liberty and restrictions upon state action, as we feel it is, or, as the District Court determined, in the Ninth Amendment's reservation of rights to the people, is broad enough to encompass a woman's decision whether or not to terminate her pregnancy.

Blackmun's own justification for the *Roe* decision underwent a process of radicalization over the years. Anyone who reads *Roe* today for the first time is struck by its intense emphasis on protecting physicians. Indeed, in many respects, the majority opinion is more about protecting them than about vindicating women's rights. This approach is not surprising: Blackmun was the former general counsel for the Mayo Clinic. By the time he retired in 1994, however, Blackmun had "grown" ideologically and was proffering an entirely different view of *Roe*'s importance. At a news conference, he observed: "I think it was right in 1973, and I think it was right today. It's a step that had to be taken as we go down the road toward the full emancipation of women." Why the emancipation-of-women policy rationale should be a concern at all for a justice, whose work is interpreting and applying statutes and the Constitution, was not addressed by Blackmun.

It is incontestable that, when untethered from the text and history of the Constitution, judicial interpretation becomes a vehicle for the importation of ideology and judicial preference into our basic law. In what is really the only instance cited in Greenhouse's book of a concern for original understanding, Blackmun wrote one especially candid memorandum on the issue of whether classifications based on sex should be viewed with the same degree of scrutiny as those based on race under the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment, which was a major issue before the Court following Blackmun's appointment:

> All in all, I am inclined to feel that sex can be considered a suspect classification just as race. This does not mean that every statute which makes a distinction based on sex is automatically invalid. It merely sets as the starting point the proposition that such a distinction is suspect and strong justification is needed to uphold it. There can be no question that women have been held down in the past in almost every area.
>
> The Fourteenth Amendment approach is a fascinating one. After all, this statute stands or falls on the Fourteenth Amendment. Clearly, however, it was not intended to meet any sex differentiation when it was adopted a hundred years ago. One certainly cannot argue that had this case arisen in 1890,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> the Court would have held that the Fourteenth Amendment has no possible application to it. The logic of this may be a little difficult to refute. On the other hand, my own feeling is that these constitutional provisions must have some flexibility and expansiveness in them as, in theory, we ourselves progress and expand in our concepts of equality.

The repudiation of what Blackmun correctly identifies here as the original understanding of the 14th Amendment allowed the rot of feminist egalitarianism to become codified as constitutional doctrine. The defeat of the Equal Rights Amendment in state legislatures meant nothing: The objectives of that amendment have all since been incorporated in the Equal Protection and Due Process Clauses of the 14th Amendment. There is no need to amend the Constitution when the Court sits as a permanent constitutional convention, drafting the document anew each term.

Moreover, the rejection of original understanding led, in Blackmun's case, to an embarrassing turn toward subjectivism and emotionalism. In *Callins* v. *Collins* (1994), he renounced the manifestly constitutional death penalty with this fatuous preening: "From this day forward, I no longer shall tinker with the machinery of death." Most infamously, in *DeShaney* v. *Winnebago County Dept. of Social Services* (1989), a case that sought unsuccessfully to create an affirmative constitutional obligation on the part of government to protect a child from family violence, Blackmun, in his dissenting opinion, risibly ejaculated: "Poor Joshua!"

Blackmun's name will forever be yoked to the rickety mess of *Roe*, as Chief Justice Roger Taney's is to *Dred Scott* v. *Sandford* (1856). The tragedy of Taney's situation is that *Dred Scott* sullied an otherwise distinguished tenure on the Court. By contrast, Blackmun's willful, result-driven opinions never rose above the mediocre, and they have wrought substantial and enduring damage to our constitutional order.

As the Court's first female member, Justice O'Connor's work has been closely observed. (It was her sex that got her on the Court; Ronald Reagan had foolishly promised, while running against Jimmy Carter, to put a woman on the Supreme Court.) Sandra Day O'Connor's judicial career has been characterized by unprincipled, *ad hoc* decisionmaking that made her the intense focus of litigants who directed their arguments to her in order to fashion a majority. (O'Connor's jurisprudential whimsicality was the true source of the influence noted in Biskupic's subtitle.)

Early on, O'Connor evinced strong support for the constitutionality of various abortion regulations, and she appeared to be a justice who might be willing to overturn or severely delimit *Roe*. But, when faced with a perfect opportunity to repair the catastrophe of *Roe* by reversing it in *Planned Parenthood* v. *Casey* (2000), she joined Justices Anthony Kennedy and David Souter in affirming the basic right to abortion in a joint opinion that set a new standard for judicial hubris.

O'Connor had it both ways with affirmative action as well. Initially, she was a consistent opponent of racial preferences, as demonstrated by the cogent opinion she wrote in *City of Richmond* v. *J.A. Croson Co.* (1989), which struck down the race-based award of public contracts by state and local governments under the 14th Amendment. However, when presented (in *Grutter* v. *Bollinger*, 2003) with an opportunity to rid higher education of the cancer of discrimination under the pernicious rationale of diversity that had been metastasizing since *Regents of the University of California* v. *Bakke* in 1978, she instead endorsed diversity as a legitimate and even compelling interest for universities in the admission of students.

The death penalty is yet another area where O'Connor was inconsistent. A solid supporter of the constitutionality of capital punishment in *Atkins* v. *Virginia* (2002), she nevertheless suddenly found that the execution of the mentally retarded violated the prohibition on cruel and unusual punishments in the Eighth Amendment. (Biskupic writes, without irony, that, "As ever, O'Connor was watching and listening to the people." Maybe so; she certainly was not applying the Constitution.) When, a few years later, the Court addressed the issue of executing minors (*Roper* v. *Simmons*), she was back dissenting with the originalists—writing separately, of course, to state her own have-it-both-ways rationale—in finding that such a practice was acceptable under the Constitution.

The inconsistency runs relentlessly through all areas of her chaotic jurisprudence. In its absence of principle, its preoccupation with the spotlight by constantly positioning to be the "swing" vote, and its sheer flightiness, O'Connor's jurisprudence reinforced, rather than undermined, stereotypes. The only really good news is that a body of decisional law so idiosyncratic will have little or no impact on future members of the Court. As Jeffrey Rosen has written: "O'Connor forces the Court and those who follow it to engage in a guessing game about her wishes in case after case. Each of her decisions is a ticket for one train only." There is, in short, nothing of precedential value to follow.

One particularly frustrating point is that both of these enemies of ordered liberty were appointments of Republican presidents. And these were presidents who correctly made the usurpations of the Court an issue in their campaigns. Now President George W. Bush has placed Chief Justice John Roberts and Justice Samuel Alito, Jr., on the Court—two men who appear, at least, ready to join Justices Clarence Thomas and Antonin Scalia in dismantling the government-by-judiciary that Blackmun and O'Connor practiced and that Greenhouse and Biskupic celebrate.

Gregory J. Sullivan is a lawyer in Pennsylvania.

Death on a March Afternoon

by Jack Trotter

A Gentleman in Charleston and the Manner of His Death
by William Baldwin
Columbia: University of South Carolina Press; 203 pp., $24.95

◆

Today, the remarkable life of Capt. Francis Warrington Dawson is little more than a footnote in the history of an era that brought an end in the South to Reconstruction and saw the advent of the "Redeemers" and their Conservative Regime. But in the 1870's and 80's, Dawson, founder of the Charleston *News and Courier*, was a maker of governors and a Confederate hero who dominated the politics of South Carolina for almost two decades before his untimely death in 1889. Born Austin John Reeks in 1840 in London, he was the eldest son

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of a Catholic family that dated back to the Wars of the Roses. In 1861, he declared his romantic intention to sail for America and join the Confederate struggle for independence, adopting the *nom de guerre* by which he would be known for the rest of his life.

Three times wounded, Dawson rose to captain's rank by war's end. Determined to remain in America, he became a journalist and, by 1867, had acquired an interest in the failing *Charleston News*. Five years later, Dawson bought out his rival, the *Courier*, and published the first issue of the combined *News and Courier* in 1873. During the same period, he married Sarah Morgan, the daughter of a Baton Rouge judge, whose diary of the Civil War years would later make her famous in her own right. By 1876, Dawson had become not merely a Charleston institution but a force to be reckoned with across the state of South Carolina and the South. His politics, like Wade Hampton's, were conservative in the sense that he favored the restoration of pre-war republican rule by an established elite, but, in other respects, he was a "progressive" who supported a number of "liberal-democratic" causes: women's suffrage, free trade, low tariffs, civil-service reform, and a prohibition on dueling.

During the years of his dominance of South Carolina politics, Dawson made many political enemies. Ironically, though, it was not a political but a private dispute that resulted in his murder in 1889 at the hands of Dr. Thomas McDow, who became infatuated with the Dawson children's Swiss governess, Helene Marie Burdayron, by all accounts a remarkably beautiful young woman. According to subsequent trial testimony, on March 12, 1889, the unarmed Dawson confronted McDow at the physician's residence and, according to McDow, threatened to expose his ungentlemanly conduct in the newspaper. When McDow challenged Dawson's authority to take such action, Dawson began beating him with a cane. Whereupon, McDow pulled a pistol from his jacket and killed Dawson—as he later claimed—in "self-defense." In fact, few white men in the South at that time were ever convicted of murder under such circumstances, and the jury at McDow's trial found the unsavory physician (believed to have been an abortionist) not guilty, in part because the prosecution could not convincingly prove its contention that Dawson had been shot from behind.

William Baldwin's latest novel, *A Gentleman in Charleston and the Manner of His Death*, does not dwell at any length on the forensic drama of McDow's trial, nor does it delve very deeply into Dawson's political and journalistic career. Instead, Baldwin fictionalizes the last few years of Dawson's domestic relations, especially the period after Helene Burdayron's arrival. What shapes the plot, such as it is, is the portrayal of Dawson's conflicted interior life: his concerns about his wife's mental health; his struggle against sexual temptation; his awareness of impending financial and professional calamity; and his premonitions of death. Yet the design of the novel seems at times to work at cross purposes, dissipating the suspense by a sometimes tedious series of digressions filtered primarily through the reflections and memories of the women in Dawson's life—not only those of his wife and Helene, but, to complicate matters further, of Sarah's sister, Miriam Dupre.

Dawson's relations with his wife were certainly troubled. Sarah was a firm believer in the paranormal and was subject to auditory hallucinations—a constant worry for her Catholic husband. Baldwin plausibly introduces into this mix a degree of sexual frustration on Dawson's part, depicting Sarah as a cerebral and sexually frigid woman. On one occasion, relieved that her husband has gone off to bed without demanding conjugal relations, she reflects:

> Such a heaving, such a grunting, such a silliness, and she wondered at God's wisdom in placing all of humanity in that thoroughly awkward and revealing position—in tying procreation to such an unsettling device.

Yet it would be unfair to suggest that Baldwin has imagined Sarah as an altogether unappealing character. Like the young Sarah Morgan, she is at times capable of a sharp-witted repartee, and the moments of emotional intimacy between her and her husband are convincingly rendered. Drawing upon Sarah's famous diary (first published in 1913) and her letters, Baldwin ties her mental instability and her obsession with the paranormal to the early death of her brother, Harry Morgan, who was killed in a dueling incident in 1861.

Baldwin's narrative purpose for bringing Miriam Dupre, Sarah's sister, into the forefront of the novel is not altogether clear. When the story opens, Miriam is separated from her irresponsible husband, Alcee Dupre, while she and her daughter have become dependent upon Dawson's generosity. Miriam is beautiful and intelligent, and a palpable erotic attraction between her and her brother-in-law is a central feature of the opening chapters of the novel. Presumably, this contrivance is intended to emphasize both Dawson's sexual frustration and his self-restraint, even as the reader is teased with the possibility of an eruption of forbidden passion. But Baldwin is not content to allot Miriam a minor role in his tale. Her story continues in the latter chapters when she is resettled in New York, an independent woman who has come to love the anonymity of the great city—so very different from provincial Charleston. She works for a living, supports her daughter, and reflects upon the fate of sister Sarah, tortured by the past and by a repressive social milieu in which the possibilities of violence were always lurking just beneath the surface. "Oh, in the South," she reflects,

> all was deeply felt, and, of course, with love came a commitment to romance and to anger—and to death. . . . In the South weren't all tainted by this binding passion, this ill-fated direction of their energies?

While Miriam's reflections provide some useful foreshadowing of the events that will result in Dawson's death, we are obliged at some length to relive with Miriam the steamy memories of a Gulf Coast honeymoon with her feckless husband, whose sole virtue was his unfailing virility. Lest the reader harbor any doubt, said virility is nicely illustrated in an entirely gratuitous, near-X-rated scene on the beach, which suggests that, should Baldwin apply his talent to the writing of bodice-ripping romances, he would make unseemly gobs of money.

By contrast, given the salacious fictional possibilities inherent in Dawson's relations with the voluptuous Helene, Baldwin must be congratulated for depicting those relations as essentially chaste, especially since there is no historical evidence to the contrary. From virtually the day of Helene's arrival, Dawson is captivated by her uncomplicated personality and her naive but potent sexual allure. He dutifully regards himself

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

as her protector in a city full of ravening young rakes but cannot refrain from gazing on her ripe young figure with evident longing. So intense becomes his sexual frustration that he is forced to find relief in frequent visits to Charleston's many brothels. While Helene is flattered by the gazes of the many men she attracts, she is virtuous enough to want to be married properly. When McDow makes his inevitable advances, she at first resists but is drawn in by his promises to divorce his German wife and marry her. When Dawson confronts McDow, we are encouraged to believe that he is driven not only by a fatherly sense of duty but by repressed passion and sexual possessiveness. Again, this is plausible enough, but, in depicting the scene of violence, Baldwin curiously seems to accept without question McDow's courtroom testimony, though, in fact, there were no corroborating eyewitnesses.

The central problem that Baldwin has had to grapple with in telling the story of Dawson's death is that there is simply no conflict between Dawson and his antagonist until, late in the novel, the two fated combatants meet and exchange the only words that have ever passed between them. To compensate for this deficiency, Baldwin introduces, early in the novel, a young man who believes himself to be Dawson's illegitimate son. David Spenser (a wholly fictitious creation), seethes with hatred for the supposed father who has never acknowledged him. Spenser, too, loves the irresistible Helene; when he is spurned by her, he has even more reason to seek the powerful journalist's destruction. Though there is a certain implausibility that clings to Spenser's character, his presence provides a good deal of the suspense that the plot otherwise lacks. Moreover, he is in his way the most intriguing of the characters, and one can easily imagine a very different—possibly better—novel in which his role would be given greater prominence.

Finally, it remains to note that Baldwin has chosen to narrate this tale in a manner that will seem, to some readers at least, a bit too artfully self-conscious. As we learn in the Introduction, the unnamed narrator has been commissioned by the widowed Sarah to create a literary memorial to the great man who has been all but forgotten by the world. This somewhat reluctant narrator is given access to the Dawson letters and diaries and, out of those, creates not a biography but a novel, changing the names of the characters in an obviously transparent fashion. (Dawson becomes "Lawton," McDow becomes "McCall," and so on.) All of this awkwardness becomes even more pronounced when we learn that said narrator once lived in Charleston and played a minor but important role in the events leading up to Dawson's demise. His true identity, however, is concealed until late in the story. Thus we are given a narrator who writes, for the most part, omnisciently, but who, from time to time, slips, with disconcertingly postmodern disregard for narrative continuity, into first-person utterance. However, Baldwin must be congratulated for creating a convincingly detailed portrait of late-19th-century Charleston, one which is populated with personalities whose dialogue is often memorable and witty.

Jack Trotter writes from Charleston, South Carolina.

Why the Empire Fell

by Thomas Fleming

The Fall of the Roman Empire: A New History of Rome and the Barbarians
by Peter Heather
New York: Oxford University Press; 572 pp., $40.00

◆

Why do empires fall? Nearly everyone has a theory. Some focus on external challenges. For example, the Soviet Union collapsed under the pressure of the arms race that Ronald Reagan heated up; the British were forced out of India by Gandhi and by the rising tide of Indian nationalism. Others seek the cause in the changing character of the people: The tired and cynical Soviet and British elites had lost the will to rule. Still others look at economic factors: The Soviet empire strangled itself with its economic inefficiency; the Brits were losing money maintaining their subcontinental fiefdom.

The fall of the Roman Empire in the West has been interpreted through every imaginable variety of theoretical approach, from Gibbon, who blamed the Christians; to A.H.M. Jones, who attributed the empire's collapse to inflation, declining agriculture, and a general economic deterioration; to Walter Goffart, who imagined there was no real collapse but only a gentle transition. Peter Heather, the most recent Roman historian to enter the lists, annihilates Gibbon's argument, pointing out that the economic resources used to build churches were not transferred from the military budget but from monies used to build and refurbish pagan temples. Gibbon's other argument, that talented men devoted themselves to religion instead of the empire, would apply only to a tiny handful (who, in any case, might have entered the bureaucracy and not the army). He is almost equally dismissive of the fashionable attempt to portray the collapse as a benign transition, and, although he takes Jones' economic analysis very seriously, he sees it only as one of several causes.

The primary cause, Heather argues, is simply the barbarians themselves. The revived Persian Empire under the Sassanian dynasty put tremendous pressure on the empire to defend its eastern frontier. At virtually the same time, German improvements in agriculture enabled them to increase their population—as well as their pressure upon the frontier—and encouraged the formation of larger and more formidable confederations such as the Allemani, the Visigoths, and the Franks. To make matters worse, the Huns succeeded in uniting their divided tribes while coopting the fighting forces of the Germanic and Iranian peoples they subjugated.

As the Romans lost North Africa to the Vandals and Spain to the Visigoths and Burgundians, the decline in tax revenues limited the size of their field armies and the effectiveness of their military response to each barbarian invasion. Some provincial Roman landowners were willing to strike bargains with the invaders so long as they could secure at least a good chunk of their holdings, while even the most patriotic Roman generals had to make deals with the enemy, hiring the Huns as mercenaries (as Aetius, the last of the Romans, did) or acknowledging the political pretensions of barbarian commanders who came to play a key role in settling the western empire. Ricimer had been more or less a Roman, but Odovacar, a prince of the Sciri, eventually grew tired of playing games with Roman puppets and, with the backing of the Roman senate, had himself acknowledged patrician by Constantinople and sent poor Romulus Augustulus packing.

Heather makes effective use of sources

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to clinch his argument, though his book suffers from a good deal of unnecessary repetition and beating about the bush. He tries very hard to persuade the reader that he really does not think the Romans were better than the barbarians, though I (to his credit) am not convinced by his protestations. His book, which is aimed at a popular audience, is never dull, though not every reader will be charmed by his breezy style or by his ungainly sentences studded with clichés lifted from pop culture. A corruption crisis in Lepcis Magna becomes, inevitably, Lepcisgate, and nearly every page has some bit of irreverent slang that verges on malapropism. Oh, for the days when ancient historians were fuddy-duddies who had at least glanced at *The King's English*.

These quibbles aside, I strongly recommend *The Fall of the Roman Empire*. As the author of books on both Goths and Huns, Heather knows his barbarians as well as he knows the empire they toppled. He has a deft way of handling the evidence without pushing a thesis beyond credibility, and he shows a fairness and insight into characters as diverse as Attila and Geiseric, Valens and Flavius Constantius that betray the instincts of a novelist.

One caveat: Readers should avoid the conclusion, which argues—quite out of the blue—that the Romans, with their policy of constant aggression against the Germans, brought it all on themselves. "By virtue of its unbounded aggression, Roman imperialism was ultimately responsible for its own destruction." This conclusion, although it is cited inevitably by blurb writers and reviewers, has a modicum of truth in it. All empires, including our own, sow the seeds of their own destruction. However, the Roman Empire was not especially aggressive. It grew partly in response to threats and challenges and partly (especially during the late republic) as the result of wars initiated by commanders in search of glory, booty, and power. Like all imperial powers, Rome engaged in wars of conquest, the worst of which was Caesar's rampage through Gaul. However, most of the empire's campaigns against the Germans were in response to aggression. In the reign of Augustus, Varus and Drusus (Tiberius' brother) both tried to play a major role on the Rhine frontier, and Varus, deluded into thinking he could play a decisive diplomatic one, was lured to his doom. Tiberius, however, recognizing the worthlessness of Germany to the empire, pulled back and removed Drusus' reckless son Germanicus.

It is not that the empire was the commonwealth of God or that Roman commanders did not go in for plundering expeditions. Imperial commanders were ruthless in dealing with the barbarian threat, frequently luring the poor devils into a friendly dinner only to assassinate them. But Roman conflicts with the Germans had far more to do with the barbarians' desire for gold, plunder, and a life of ease than with Roman aggression. Marcus Aurelius was wise enough to realize that conquering Germania and turning it into a province was the most sensible, albeit a costly, solution to German hooliganism. He died, however, on the eve of accomplishing his project, which his worthless son Commodus abandoned, so eager was he to get back to Rome to begin enjoying the fruits of imperial power. This was too bad for the empire and too bad for the Germans, most of whom remained beyond the Roman *limes*, the pale of civilization.

Thomas Fleming is the editor of Chronicles *and the author, most recently, of* The Morality of Everyday Life.

THE CONSERVATIVE BOOKSHELF

ESSENTIAL WORKS THAT IMPACT TODAY'S CONSERVATIVE THINKERS

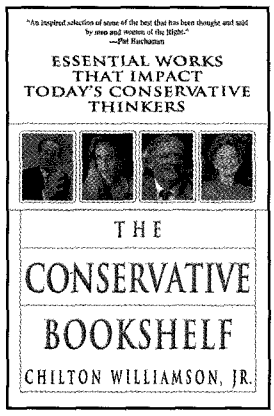
by Chilton Williamson, Jr.

"Williamson, the former book review editor at *National Review* and current senior editor for books at *Chronicles* and the author of several novels and non-fiction books himself, knows the difference between a real classic and the mental belches that today often masquerade as 'conservatism.'"

—**Samuel Francis**

"Mr. Williamson's selection of 50 works is as near perfection as is ever approached in this vale of tears. . . . The wise reading and understanding that lie behind his choices are awesome."

—**Clyde Wilson**



How many of these conservative classics have you read?

One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich by Alexandr Solzhenitsyn
Suicide of the West by James Burnham
Brave New World by Aldous Huxley
Witness by Whittaker Chambers
The Camp of the Saints by Jean Raspail
City of God by St. Augustine
The Conservative Mind by Russell Kirk
Ideas Have Consequences by Richard Weaver

These and 42 other essential works, selected by Chilton Williamson, Jr., define the ideas that have informed conservatism over the past 4,000 years. No one is better suited to know the books that best articulate just what it means to be a conservative. His insightful analysis and commentary illustrate the timeliness of each title and reveal why these 50 works have earned a place in the library of every thoughtful conservative.

Chronicles
A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN CULTURE

- send check or money order to 928 N. Main Street, Rockford, IL 61103
- call (800) 383-0680 to order with MasterCard, Visa, Amex, Discover
- purchase online at *ChroniclesMagazine.org*

Hardcover Price $27.95

($22.95 + $5.00 shipping and handling)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

by Aaron D. Wolf

Everybody Loves Paul

These are the days of shame for American Christians. Not the sort of shame, like Isaiah's, that results from coming face to face with a holy God. ("Woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips.") Instead, it is the sort that Buck Dorkman feels in the school cafeteria, when he picks up his tray at the end of the lunch counter and realizes that, once again, he has nowhere to sit. There is no room at any of the Cool Tables for Buck Dorkman.

Ashamed of who he is and yearning for acceptance, Buck swallows his pride and tries to remake himself in the image of those he wants to impress. ("To the Jew," some might interject here, "I became as a Jew.") He even ditches his dorky friends. But sometimes, human nature being what it is, no compromise is good enough to impress those who have already attained what he is seeking. "Nice jacket, Poindexter, but lose the pocket protector!"

By the standards of today's national cafeteria, the Jesus Who came to seek and save the lost and Who bids His Church to "compel them to come in" is not very cool. So, in order to impress the popular crowd, many Christians have felt compelled to give their Friend an extreme makeover, stripping Him of the garments of tradition and the language of sin and forgiveness, so the only thing He has to say is "Accept everybody, and don't judge!"

This is the Jesus espoused by one of the coolest guys in the lunchroom—a fellow named Paul Hewson, who wears dark sunglasses nearly everywhere he goes, even when he preaches from the pulpits of America's churches. Born in 1960 in Dublin to a Catholic father and a Protestant mother, Paul knows that "religion is the enemy of God. It's almost like religion is what happens when the Spirit has left the building." This probably explains why the closest thing to a "church" that Paul and his very cool friends David, Adam, and Larry ever belonged to was a Bible-study fellowship called Shalom—from which they bolted in the early 80's when it became too churchy. Since then, Paul has looked for God wherever he can find Him. As he told *Christianity Today*, "I just go where the life is, you know? Where I feel the Holy Spirit."

In fact, Paul has gone a step further (though he'd be loath to admit it): He has created his own religion, which looks, in part, like Christianity but contains elements of Judaism, Islam, and Buddhism. It's the kind of religion that everyone in the lunchroom can get behind, because its only commandment is *Thou shalt not judge*—which, Paul will tell you, is really the central teaching of every historic faith ("Check Judaism. Check Islam. Check pretty much anyone"), especially Christianity, before it was perverted by religion. "You know," Paul said recently, "the only time Christ is judgmental is on the subject of the poor." Inspired by his own theology-by-concordance (which seems to overlook more than a few thorny passages of Scripture), Paul cofounded, in 2002, an organization called DATA, which stands for Debt, AIDS, Trade, and Africa. The chief sacrament of Paul's religion is the act of supporting DATA's vision of writing off all of Africa's debts to the world's "wealthy nations" and eliminating AIDS in the Dark Continent through education, medication, and contraception.

Paul has had many opportunities to promote his religion because, well, he is a very popular guy—a rock star, in fact. It may come as a surprise to some that the very churches that Paul criticizes so fiercely as bastions of Spirit-killing religion are dying to have Paul speak from their pulpits. After all, he takes every opportunity he can find to mock them ("God has some really weird kids") and everything that their traditions stand for: "[True religion] is not all about the things that the church bangs on about. It is not about sexual immorality . . . "

But Buck Dorkman doesn't care. He's far too interested in graduating to the Cool Table to notice the insults. In fact, he is thrilled that a rock star is interested in him. For years, he has been imitating Paul, attempting to create music that approaches Paul's level of vapid, pretentious coolness, hoping that all of the young people who worship Paul will think that Buck is just like him. Unfortunately, Paul doesn't even seem flattered and has simply called Buck's music "sh-t." In Paul's words, Buck and his sad little kind have failed to understand that "Music is the language of the spirit *anyway*. Its first function is praise to creation—praise to the beauty of the woman lying next to you, or the woman you would like to lie next to you."

Paul and his friends have never liked the label "Christian rock band," because Paul likes being a regular rock star, who can "cling to his right to be an ass." And though he insists that, by assing around, he and his band have really "f--ked up their corner of the Christian market," Paul's rebel-with-a-cause behavior has only gained more fawning attention from Christians, who are eager to attach their names to his Great Cause—from Bill Hybels to Billy Graham, from Presbyterians to Methodists, from Wheaton College to *Christianity Today*.

At this year's Presidential Prayer Breakfast, where Paul was the keynote speaker, he quoted from the New Testament, the Koran, and "the Jewish Scripture," admonishing President Bush and Congress that God will "judge" (gasp!) America and her churches if they fail to keep Africa from "going up in flames." President Bush followed Paul at the podium and, in true Dorkman fashion, proclaimed, "I've gotten to know Bono. (Laughter.) He's a doer. The thing about this good citizen of the world is he's used his position to get things done." Speaking for Dorkmans everywhere, he added, "You're an amazing guy, Bono. God bless you. (Applause.)"

True Christianity is concerned with the plight of the poor, the suffering, the dying. But the greater reality that the Church is called to address has to do with sin, righteousness, and judgment and how the crucified God-Man redeemed mankind. What insight does Paul have to give those who possess the "words of eternal life," other than how to "be an ass"? How great is the loss of faith among a people who titter in the presence of a "citizen of the world," such as Bono, who despises all that they once held dear? ◁

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

by Scott P. Richert

A Few Bad Men

The results of two extensive studies were released too late for me to consider them in my column ("Truth and Consequences") last month. Both the "Report on the Implementation of the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People," released by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), and the 2006 Supplementary Report to "The Nature and Scope of the Problem of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Catholic Priests and Deacons in the United States 1950-2002," the 2004 study released by the John Jay College of Criminal Justice, echo the four main points that I made: the majority of priests have been accused of only one incident of abuse; most of the confirmed cases of abuse were at the hands of repeat offenders; most of the cases were homosexual in orientation; and most of the cases were in large dioceses on the East and West Coasts.

More interesting is the confirmation of several points that were only hinted at in previous studies. For instance, the 2006 Supplementary Report charted the sex of victims by the type of abuser (those with a single victim; those with a single victim but potential other victims; those with two to nine victims; and those with ten or more victims). The pattern is very clear: The more victims a cleric abused, the more likely he was to have favored male victims. Slightly more than one in three victims of single-incident abusers were female; only one in ten victims of ten-plus-incident abusers was female.

The significance of these numbers is partly obscured by the study's use of the term "victim selection" to describe the disparities. While technically accurate, that phrase gives the impression that predatory priests were deciding with each incident whether to abuse a male or a female. However, while the study does not offer data on this point, most multiple-incident abusers likely confined their activities to one sex or the other, so that, of the 149 priests who had ten or more victims, the number who abused females was considerably smaller.

Perhaps it would have been more accurate to speak here of the abuser's "orientation," even though that term is politically explosive. Combined with the fact that the age at the time of abuse of the vast majority of victims (11-17) means that the acts should properly be classified as "ephebophilic" (concerning postpubescent minors) rather than "pedophilic" (prepubescent), these numbers cast significant doubt on the claim of both the Survivors' Network of Those Abused by Priests and Voice of the Faithful that homosexuality has nothing to do with the clerical sexual-abuse crisis. If SNAP and VOTF were serious about their desire to prevent future sexual abuse, they would be supporting, rather than attacking, the Vatican's "Instruction Concerning the Criteria for the Discernment of Vocations With Regard to Persons With Homosexual Tendencies in View of Their Admission to the Seminary and to Holy Orders," which Pope Benedict signed last fall.

The second interesting point confirmed by the 2006 Supplementary Report is that the accusation rate against priests has dropped dramatically over the past quarter-century, topping out in 1980 (shortly after the election of Pope John Paul II), much earlier than the "continuing crisis" rhetoric of both liberals and traditionalists might lead us to believe. This is despite the fact that "approximately a third of all reports were made in 2002 after an average delay of 30 years." (In determining the accusation rate, the accusation is classified by the date of the alleged abuse.) So, while the rate of reporting has risen dramatically, we have seen no corresponding increase in recent abuse activity—indeed, the average time between the alleged abuse and the reporting of the incident has *increased* over the past half-century. (According to the USCCB's report, for incidents reported in 2005, the average time between the alleged abuse and the report is now close to 35 years.)

There are many possible explanations for this anomaly, and those who wish to believe that abuse is continuing today at the same rate as at the height of the crisis might well claim that reporting is, once again, delayed. That seems unlikely, however, since some of the circumstances that are normally cited to explain an alleged victim's delay in reporting are absent or mitigated: for instance, fear of not being believed; fear of reprisal from parents who think that priests can do no wrong; an "authoritarian" Church structure that refuses even to acknowledge the possibility (let alone the reality) of abuse. If anything, the massive media attention devoted to this issue in recent years has encouraged victims to come forward who may previously have been reluctant to do so.

Another explanation is more plausible: As the 2006 Supplementary Report shows, the bulk of this problem has been confined to a particular cohort of priests, born between 1925 and 1950 and ordained between 1950 and 1975. Neither traditionalists nor liberals will find much here to support their respective theories about the role of Vatican II in causing or mitigating this crisis. If anything, the "spirit" (not the letter) of Vatican II—what Pope Benedict called, in a major address in December 2005, "the hermeneutics of discontinuity"—and the sexual-abuse crisis likely both have their roots in the destruction of traditional society, particularly sexual morality, that started much earlier than the 1960's. And the recovery from the crisis since 1980, it appears, may have something to do with the influx of more orthodox and traditionally minded priests under John Paul II—a process that accelerated throughout his pontificate and will likely reach new levels under Pope Benedict.

Finally, despite claims that the Church is still turning a blind eye to allegations of sexual abuse, the USCCB's report shows that over 81 percent of diocesan priests accused in 2005, and 73 percent of religious, were deceased, already removed, or missing. Of the remaining, most were removed temporarily (pending investigation) or permanently. Only 12 diocesan priests, and no religious, were returned to ministry after an investigation into the validity of the charges. We may be seeing the light at the end of the tunnel, *Deo volente*. ©

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Letter From Germany

by Josef Schüsslburner

Democratizing Germany: Paving the Way for Hitler

◆

The surprise victory of the militant Islamic group Hamas in recent Palestinian parliamentary elections is an ominous warning about the prospect of democratization that is either directly or, as in the Palestinian case, somewhat indirectly imposed from without.

Perhaps Ghazi al-Jawar, the former provisional president of Iraq, was correct when he warned about the possible emergence of an Iraqi Hitler; unlike in many other instances where Hitler's name is invoked, the reference could be relevant in this case. The democratization of Germany was not a policy that began in the wake of World War II; it had already begun during the last phase of World War I, when President Woodrow Wilson refused to negotiate a peace treaty with the German delegation as long as Germany was not a democratic state. This position was somewhat strange, because the imperial constitution had been explicitly amended to require the government to be based on the rule of a majority of parliament, which had been elected by free and secret ballot (one man, one vote) since its inception in 1867. Therefore, this amendment, which had been passed before the resumption of peace talks in 1918, made the German imperial constitution akin to the British parliamentary monarchy, which Wilson obviously considered to be democratic. In the case of Germany, however, Wilson insisted on the dismantlement of the monarchy as precondition for peace talks.

This would be a revolution on par with the preceding development in Russia that had given Wilson his justification for entering the war, to "make the world safe for democracy." Before the first "liberal" phase of the Russian Revolution, this slogan would have been too preposterous a reason for an alliance with Czarist Russia against Germany or even the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Since Russia appeared to be a democracy, Wilson insisted that the Russian provisional government continue the war against Germany as a war for democracy, in strong opposition to the sentiments of the overwhelming majority of the Russian population. This made it easy for the Russian communists to gain popular support, and the German government, imitating the revolutionizing policy of the West against the German imperial constitutional system, supported the Russian communists by bringing in Lenin from Switzerland.

Wilson's insistence on the dismantlement of the monarchy gave the political left in Germany the audacity to defy the existing constitution and start the revolution, which resulted in the abdication of all German monarchs and the establishment of what became known as the Weimar Republic. In view of the expectations created by President Wilson's Fourteen Points, the politicians who sought to establish the republican constitution received a majority of votes from the German populace. And though this amounted to a democratic ratification of the republican constitution, it was in contravention to the rules required to amend the existing imperial constitution, which had its own democratic legitimacy.

In the beginning, this constitutional break was not taken too seriously, because the majority supported it. One major reason for this was the shift of the primarily Catholic centrist party from monarchy to republic. The centrist party held the balance between the right-wing parties—the Conservatives and National Liberals, who favored the imperial constitution—and the Social Democrats and the left-wing Liberals who favored a republican constitution. For many of the Social Democrats, "republic" meant something akin to what became known as the Soviet system. Accordingly, in both Germany and Russia, the Social Democrats split on the verge of the revolution, and the Communist Party emerged.

When it became obvious to the German public that the peace conditions would not live up to the expectations that Wilson's points had created, rightly or wrongly, the formal majority that had allowed the passing of the republican constitution immediately dwindled and was never really reached again. It became obvious that the amendment to the imperial constitution that Wilson had refused to accept was the most that Germany was able to offer at that time apart from foreign pressure and the threat of direct military intervention or invasion. Thus, the republican constitution was overwhelmingly viewed as a product of foreign democratizing intervention, enabling a revolution that would not have taken place otherwise. On the other hand, the *fait accompli* had been made, and it was no longer possible to return to the *status quo ante*.

Since the legitimacy of the republican constitution could not be found in the legality of its establishment, dubious arguments were advanced to justify the republic's very existence. Many were based on the "value philosophy" (*materielle Werteethik*), which held that a constitution, regardless of how it came into existence, was the expression of the values of a given people at a specific time. This argument would have resonated with the people, perhaps, if Wilson's assumption that the Germans had been suppressed by imperial rule had been true. This, however, had not been the case.

There was indeed a constitutional difference between the parliamentary monarchy of Britain and the constitutional monarchy in Germany. The head of the government in Britain was selected from the majority of the British parliament, whereas, in Germany, the chief of the government was the highest civil servant to be appointed at the monarch's discretion. Still, the German government needed a majority of parliament—which was democratically elected—to get its laws and budgets passed. This mechanism could very well, at a later stage, have led to something more resembling the British situation. The British parliamentary monarchy itself had been the product of practical evolution and not of design. This evolution did not occur in Germany, because the political parties in parliament were too resentful of one another to agree on the principle that the majority party should hold the chancellorship; instead, they preferred the government of a high-ranking civil servant who was considered politically neutral. It is also true that the military had a certain extra-constitutional status, since it swore allegiance only to the monarch, who, him-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

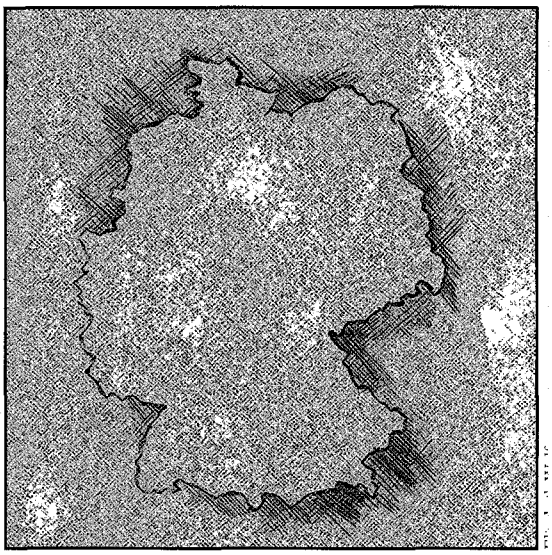
self, had to take the oath to preserve the constitution.

Those shortcomings of the German situation (when compared with England), did not justify, in the eyes of the majority of Germans from the 1920's onward, the illegality of the revolution, despite whatever minor political freedoms it may have gained them. Rather, this illegality remained a major shock for a people who had been considered the most legally minded and law-abiding of the pre-war period. Thus, the "value" argument in favor of the republican constitution was not really convincing, and, more importantly, it created legitimacy and even legality on condition: If such "values" justified one revolution, then they could also justify the next revolution, whose gains would ultimately justify this illegal act. Many, therefore, believed that the events of 1918-19 were not a real revolution, or that the revolution must be brought to its logical conclusion. This deeply held emotion—fostered by the democratizing slogans of the victorious powers, which swept away any consideration of a restoration of the old constitution or a reversal of the events of 1918—anticipated a democratic dictatorship: All powers had to be conferred upon a people's government that would fulfill the promise of democratic ideology. Correspondingly, Germany only narrowly escaped the Russian development, where the liberal phase of the revolution that was so much appreciated by President Wilson was transformed into a communist system. What was averted in Germany in the 1920's by a near civil war came, finally, in the 1930's—not as a communist regime, but as National Socialism.

Hitler knew very well that his rise to power would only be possible in the framework of democracy. He acknowledged the democratic revolution of 1918. His harsh criticism against the people who conducted it ("*Novemberverbrecher*") only meant that the revolution failed in his eyes to take advantage of its full potential by inciting a *levée en masse* and continuing the war. Although he initially deceived certain right-wing circles into thinking that the kaiser might return to office, once in power, Hitler made it unambiguously clear that the removal of the monarchy was positive, and several leading figures who supported the kaiser were murdered in 1934, under the guise of the quelling of the so-called Röhm uprising. When Hitler visited Mussolini in 1938, he became aware of the restraint that the Italian monarchy, together with the military and the Church, had on fascist rule, and, with high appreciation for the removal of the German monarchy, he increased the pension entitlements of former Social Democratic secretaries of state who conducted the revolution in 1918. Hitler considered this revolution to have reached its ultimate completion in his own revolution of 1933-34, which established the power of the people by giving all powers to a leader who was determined to enforce and execute the people's undivided will.

This development demonstrates the unfolding of the democratic ideal, which cannot escape, given certain conditions, its inherent Jacobin possibility. Such a development is likely to occur whenever democracy is, or is thought to be, the result of foreign intervention in a place where democracy itself is cherished as an abstract idea. The democratic system, thus established, will be suspected of having been introduced as an instrument of the democratizing power. This logic leads more or less cogently to totalitarianism, which is not the opposite of democracy but its ultimate Jacobin manifestation. Thus, Wilson's policy of making the world safe for democracy paved the way not only for Lenin in Russia (in this case, with some help from Germany) but for Hitler in Germany. This was certainly an unintended consequence, but not an entirely unlikely one. Such a development would have been less likely had the republic not been conceived as the result of foreign intervention. In all likelihood, a democratic system, even a republic, would have developed on its own in Germany as a result of a lost war that would have, in turn, raised the question of constitutional legitimacy. A republic so established would have had a more stable foundation, since it would have been conceived as a solution for the failed legitimacy of the monarchy. A democracy developed in such context would not have been so easily challenged by measuring it against the utopian insinuations of the democratic ideal, which abhors the fetters of a constitutional order.

Those who seek to spread democracy to other countries by military force are not friends of democracy, since they do not really believe that democracy is a good concept. Otherwise, they would have confidence that this order will develop on its own. Instead of "Western-style democracy," the seeds of totalitarianism are being planted—which, of course, will justify future wars for democracy.



Josef Schüsslburner is the author, most recently, of Demokratie-Sonderweg Bundesrepublik Analyse der Herrschaftsordnung in Deutschland.

Letter From Greece

by Nikos Hidiroglou

Talking About Conservatism: The Politics of Guilt

◆

It is not easy nowadays even to mention the word *conservative* in Greece. Historical factors, as well as the cultural dominance of the left since the restoration of democracy in 1974, have put immense pressure on everyone who is trying to represent the right in the modern Hellenic Republic. Even when speaking of the ruling right-wing New Democracy (ND) Party, the word *liberal* is most often used to express its ideology. In 1977, the term *radical liberalism* was adopted by the ND congress, in order to describe the ideology of the party. Such terms as *conservative* and *Christian democrat*, used by other parties that collectively form, along with ND, the European Popular Party (EPP) in the European Parliament, were excluded, demonstrating the existence of anti-right reflexes within the rank and file of ND.

Fearful of the dominance of the left-wing intelligentsia and its influence on the media, ND has tried to distance itself from its former policies. Today, Greek historians contend that, following World

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

War II, the (mainly urban) middle class which formed the backbone of ND and its predecessors did not bother much to counter the left's propaganda, having been appeased by the victory of the monarchist national army during the clashes with the communists (1946-49) in the period that followed the liberation of the country from the occupation by the Nazis and their allies. This left a dangerous vacuum that was then filled by the left, which systematically infiltrated the universities, the public-administration sector, and the arts. For the Greek right, the ideological battle was lost from the beginning, since it was never fought.

Recent research has revealed that 75 percent of the electoral base of ND is conservative, meaning that they adhere to the core traditional values—motherland, religion, and family—that were ridiculed by the military junta that ruled Greece from 1967 to 1974. The research also shows that, in Greece's largely conservative north, especially in Macedonia and Thrace, nationalism is prevalent among the party ranks. There is not a single village, town, or city in the north of the country where the national flag does not fly, along with the Byzantine one, on the tops of buildings and schools, or at the gates of industrial, commercial, and public-administration complexes.

The transformation of the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK), which ruled Greece (with disastrous results) from 1981 to 2004 (with ND holding power briefly from 1990 to 1993), into a modern social-democratic but also liberal political party (much like the Democratic Party in the United States) has changed the political climate in Greece. Under the "centrist" leadership of Mr. George Papandreou, Jr. (son of the late Andreas Papandreou, who was an enemy of Ronald Reagan and a friend of the Soviets), PASOK's radical socialist elements (trade unionists and overt leftists) have been isolated, while the incorporation of neoliberals (Stefanos Manos and Andreas Andrianopoulos) has shown that, in the field of social rights, the modern or reformist left and the liberals have arrived at some sort of temporary convergence.

This development has alarmed the right-wing elements within ND. At the same time, ND's recently adopted strategy of capturing the ideological "middle ground" has engendered confusion and disappointment among party members. Such rhetoric did yield temporary results in the elections of March 2004, but it is not creating an ideological trend that will form the basis of ND's political dominance of the center-right in Greece. The party rank-and-file still have an allergic reaction to any proposal for a dialogue on ideology. But genuine politics is about ideas and ideals, not the mere conduct of public affairs, which could be managed by the CEO of any mid-sized company. Yet the right suffers from an irrational ideological embarrassment, which is not historically justified, given that the right saved democracy and freedom in Greece.

The socialists still use the word *conservative* in a derogatory manner when describing the center-right ND. When things get tough for the corrupt socialists, they use the word *right* instead, in order to whip up fear among the people that some sort of political devil is going to ascend to power and deprive the "progressive" citizens of their rights and privileges. Such tactics are employed even by supposedly serious and "modern" politicians of the left, including the "progressive" Mr. George Papandreou.

The emergence, since 2000, of the nationalist right-wing party LA.O.S (Popular Orthodox Rally) has also caused headaches for the leadership of ND. In the last parliamentary elections, LA.O.S garnered a formidable 2.3 percent of the vote, which is not far from the 3-percent prerequisite for entrance into parliament. In recent public-opinion polls, LA.O.S gained the approval of 5.6 percent of the electorate by appealing to voters' frustration over not enjoying the fulfillment of their political aspirations. The populist approach of the LA.O.S leadership, its attacks on the ruling party, its efforts to win over autonomous and radical left-wing elements, and its anti-American and nationalist rhetoric have temporarily attracted the attention of the electorate, especially in the conservative north.

The need for ND, which houses the overwhelming majority of right-wing voters, to return to its conservative roots is more than obvious. Holding the "middle ground" will not take the Greek right anywhere; it only serves the liberals and the left. The patriotic right in Greece should not surrender more vital space to the propagandists of liberalism, immorality, and internationalism.

Nikos Hidiroglou writes for Metro, *a newspaper published in Athens.*

LIBERAL ARTS

WE NEVER USE TERRORISM—UNLESS IT IS NECESSARY

"Prof. Ahmed assured us that there was no danger in traveling there for research, but our Deoband tour guide, who was a leading Indian-Muslim radical, began our four-hour journey by describing his latest, best-selling book, 'Jihad and Terrorism.' I asked him about the nature of the book, and he then looked away to describe his thesis, as it is custom in his orthodox tradition not to look directly at a woman.

"He said that it was a justification of the usually un-Islamic fighting tactics such as those used by Osama bin Laden and other terrorists in response to what he called 'American barbarism.' He argued that because America's tactics against his people—like those seen in Abu Ghraib—were so horrific, 'freedom fighters' could use extraordinary measures to combat them."

—*from "A Young American in the Muslim World," by Hailey Woldt* (beliefnet.com)

Letter From New Orleans

by Russell Desmond

Six Months After Katrina

◆

Sitting at Mass in St. Theresa's Church on Camp Street in New Orleans some six months after Hurricane Katrina, my eyes rise naturally above the altar. There, I see a large, ugly panel of various sheets of plywood and two-by-fours filling the vast hole where the fine old stained glass depicting an incident in the saint's life once was, before it was blown out during the storm. And, as this is a small, poor parish, odds are, it will never be replaced. The one panel that remains includes the state seal of Louisiana, a round emblem enclosing the image of a pelican feeding her young. This view reminds me of the condition of this city and surrounding parishes hit by Katrina; many areas

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

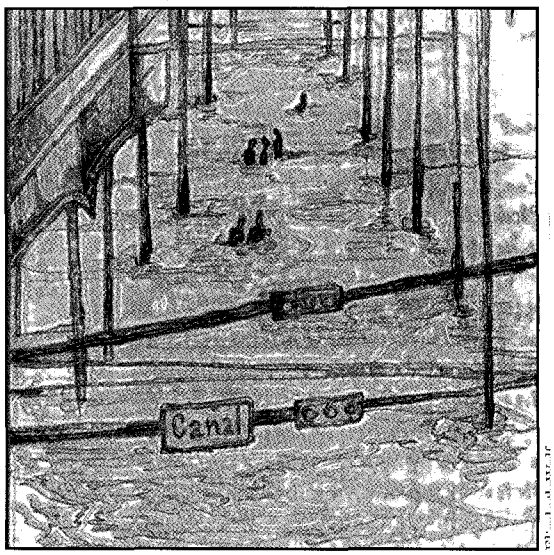
are still an ugly reality of wrecked houses and uncollected trash, while people cling to the illusion of an unfathomable belief in the powers of the god of the State—not the one in Baton Rouge, of course, but that in the District of Columbia—to cure all ills.

A month or so back, we went downtown to St. Louis Cathedral and heard Archbishop Hughes warn that people should be very careful how they inject race into the dialogue about rebuilding the city. One man in attendance that day—our mayor, Ray Nagin—was apparently not paying much attention, as the very next day, Martin Luther King, Jr., Day, was the occasion of his famed pronouncement, "and I don't care what people are saying Uptown or wherever they are. This city will be chocolate at the end of the day." Interestingly, almost all of the commentators on that speech neglected to include the opening qualifier. And it was a rather odd thing for a black mayor of New Orleans to say, with the implication that everyone uptown is white, ignoring the reality of the many black neighborhoods uptown, such as Central City, "Gert Town," "Black Pearl," and large sections between Magazine Street and the river. But our mayor does not really care about fine points, after all, and has revealed himself to be as crass a panderer as any of his fellow politicians, catering to whatever audience is at hand—as in his recent comment about his mostly white rival candidates ("not many of them look like us") to an NAACP meeting in Houston.

There are still no streetcars on St. Charles Avenue, but things are otherwise sort of back to normal. A friend of mine said that, the other evening, just as he was about to get on a St. Charles bus after work, he saw a fight break out on the bus and heard kids screaming, "He's gonna stick him!" Seconds later, he saw them jump out in panic after the stabbing, while the bus driver, a large black woman, huffed repeatedly, "I'm gonna bitch-slap somebody!" I caught one of those buses up to the doctor the other day and noticed that the Rite-Aid on Louisiana and St. Charles still consists of a trailer parked in front of the defunct pharmacy. A large sign stuck on the trailer proudly says, "Welcome Back New Orleans." Rite-Aid is not alone in displaying its optimism. A 40-plus-story-high banner elegantly draped over the still mostly shredded windows hangs off of the Hyatt hotel with the slogan "Let the Good Times Roll" in misspelled French.

By the way, the buses here, a motley fleet, some brought in from other towns still sporting destinations to streets not even in this city, are free until June because, apparently, the federal government (under the aegis of FEMA) cares more about subsidizing a private company than about doing the job it is supposed to do—that is, delivering mail. Last week, six months after the storm, I called the U.S. Post Office for the third time in frustration at not being able to get much mail at my bookstore in the French Quarter, an area that never flooded. (I conducted a book swap the day after Katrina and reopened on September 30.) They admit not even trying to deliver any third- or fourth-class mail in the city until, well, who knows when. I was told on a return call by a local customer-service representative that, before regular mail can be delivered, "we've got to get our people home." A similar theme was heard in the first televised mayoral debate the other night, with most candidates pining over getting everyone back. Only one, the sometimes strident, if wonderful (and completely unelectable), former city councilwoman Peggy Wilson, challenged that consensus, saying that there are some types of people we don't want back—namely, the drug addicts, the gangs, and the welfare queens. Ah, how well I remember watching one of those welfare queens point out exactly which car she wanted stolen by her boys in front of my apartment building two blocks from the Convention Center on that terrible Thursday after the storm.

I also remember how, after the news broke that Jefferson Parish president Aaron Broussard had let the pump workers leave their posts to run for shelter before the storm, causing incalculable damage to that community, my wife suggested how symptomatic that was of exactly what is wrong with this country—that is, it is all about self-interest without any concept of a larger public or civic duty. *Who cares that the pump workers were there to protect the whole community—let them go home! Who cares that a full third of the New Orleans police force seems to have disappeared during and after the storm—those that stayed were not much help, anyway.* I crossed Canal Street six times in the days after Katrina and saw groups of policemen standing around gabbing while shops were being looted nearby. Although the main entrances to the two most important sales-tax-generating properties in the city, the shopping centers One Canal Place and the Riverwalk, were both literally across the street from the police command post established at Harrah's Casino, both were heavily looted, and one of them was set on fire. But who cares? Obviously not New Orleans' finest. There is a T-shirt selling here now that pokes fun at this sad situation, changing the initials N.O.P.D. (New Orleans Police Department) to "Not Our Problem, Dude." And the stories of coordinated looting by the police themselves are too numerous and detailed to be denied, though but a dozen officers have been indicted for such crimes (if we don't count the one New Orleans cop caught in Houston driving a stolen Cadillac SUV). So much for honor, duty, and civic pride.



What continues to strike me above all about the subject of Katrina and its aftermath—both the natural disaster and the human disaster that followed, encompassing the total failure of the police department, the total abandonment of the city by the mayor, the very un-American forced evacuation of perfectly dry, livable areas after the storm (and the deprivation of food and running water to those who tried to remain to protect their property), the subsequent looting, fires, and just general chaos—is not how specific the situation was to this place but, on the contrary, how common it could be, how easily other large urban communities could suffer the same fate given some similar natural disaster, terrorist act, or epidemic. It could happen anywhere: the bungling bureaucracies, the spineless politicians, the corrupt police, the entitlement class hovering about, just waiting for their chance to break the

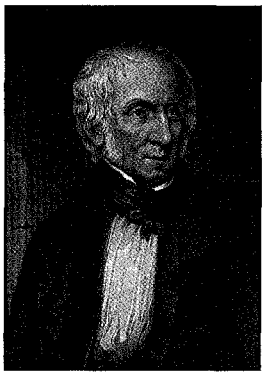
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

law with impunity. Nor is it something new. Something quite like it happened some one-hundred-and-thirtysomething years ago in supposedly the most civilized city on earth—namely, the looting and destruction of wealthy properties by the poor during the Paris Commune of 1871. What large urban center in this country is not under the dormant threat of a permanently entitled class anxious to exploit every conceivable opportunity to get something for nothing? And is this really that surprising, in a society in which so many state and municipal governments have encouraged such an idea for so long by their profligate support of lotteries and casinos?

In other ways, things are back to usual. We certainly still have our quotient of wacky politics. This week, our formerly fugitive clerk of court, Kimberly Williamson Butler (also now a mayoral candidate), revealed that she sees herself as comparable to Rosa Parks, Dr. King, Gandhi, and Nelson Mandela. Perhaps more astonishing than her immodesty was the group of people of mixed race there to applaud her as she came out of prison. And most of the schizophrenic street "characters" who have haunted the French Quarter for years seem to have returned. Indeed, a first-time traveler to the city would probably not notice anything awry or, if he did think the town a bit slovenly and unkempt, would not realize that such is simply its usual condition. He may notice some blue tarps still on the roofs while driving in from the airport through Jefferson Parish, but he would find the French Quarter perfectly intact, as it pretty much was the day after the storm (apart from some trees blown over and debris in the street). Canal Street looks only a bit more dismal than usual. Most out-of-towners coming into my shop admit that their friends told them they were crazy to come down here, as if things were still as wild as during that hectic week after the storm. So now we sit beneath the black cloud of a self-fulfilling prophecy: No tourists will come if others dare not.

A repeat visitor would probably notice some changes, but if he were to stick to the French Quarter, they would not be many. He may be disappointed by the decline of service in the hotels and restaurants, or that one or another of his favorite restaurants might not have reopened or may be keeping odd hours or have a limited menu. Were he to drive uptown, however, he would find the shops on Magazine Street thriving as before with their mostly local business. But the great canopy of oak trees along St. Charles Avenue is now sadly in tatters, the branches looking more like stark antlers than their formerly fulsome, shade-bearing selves. And it is getting hot again, and with the summer comes hurricane season, as inevitably as Mardi Gras follows Twelfth Night. When residents were returning in October, I noticed that many people living here but originally from somewhere else bolted permanently, in fear of just that—another hurricane season. For most of us who are from the area, it is not quite as frightful, kind of in the blood, like the threat of avalanches to mountain-bred people or earthquakes to Californians. We all live beneath the threat of natural catastrophe of some kind or another. What one might hope is not to have to fear the price of human-bred catastrophe quite so frequently. And, by the way, apart from construction supplies, there is one commodity apparently in greater demand now than before the storm. Gun sales are way up.

Russell Desmond writes from New Orleans.



The Christian Imagination
English Literature From Wordsworth to Tolkien

The Rockford Institute's Center for the Restoration of Humane Learning is pleased to announce a new distance-learning course taught by literary biographer Joseph Pearce, writer-in-residence at Ave Maria University.

With published biographies of Oscar Wilde, J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, and others, Mr. Pearce is uniquely qualified to teach this course, which includes 24 lectures and a study guide. The course explores the lives of the giants of 19th- and 20th-century English literature and reveals the eternal Christian truths expressed in their work.

For more information, please call Jan Kooistra at (815) 964-5811
or e-mail *jkooistra@rockfordinstitute.org.*

The Rockford Institute
928 North Main Street
Rockford, Illinois 61103

Price: $240.00
When ordering, specify ACCIS (audiocassette) or ACCISCD (CD).
- send check or money order to 928 N. Main Street, Rockford, IL 61103
- call (800) 383-0680 to order with MasterCard, Visa, Amex, Discover
- purchase online at the webstore on *ChroniclesMagazine.org*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

by Srdja Trifkovic

Neglected New Martyrs

Abdul Rahman, an Afghan who faced the death penalty in his native country for converting from Islam to Christianity, was granted political asylum in Italy and arrived in Rome on March 29. His release came after several weeks of intense pressure by the United States and other Western governments on Kabul to spare his life and let him leave the country. Pope Benedict XVI also intervened on his behalf, and millions of Christians all over the world prayed for his safety.

President Hamid Karzai's government eventually relented, not by removing death for apostasy from the statute book but by proclaiming Rahman insane and therefore unfit to stand trial. The country was outraged. Afghan parliamentary deputies and Islamic scholars criticized Karzai for succumbing to Western pressure and demanded that Rahman be executed; ordinary Afghans took to the streets chanting, "death to Christians." All of that, in a country that President George W. Bush calls a "key partner" and "an inspiration" that will lead others in the region "to demand their freedom."

Two important aspects of Rahman's case have been neglected in the media coverage and public debate: the kind of society that is emerging in Afghanistan, as well as in Iraq, in the wake of the U.S. military action; and the overall treatment of Christians in the Muslim world. Undue prominence was given, on the other hand, to the misleading claims by Islam's apologists in the West that apostasy is not a capital crime under *sharia*.

Rahman's case became a *cause célèbre* only because of the presence of American troops in Afghanistan. Having him executed for apostasy under their noses would have thrown unwelcome light on the ongoing debacle known as "democratizing the greater Middle East." In "democratized" Afghanistan, Rahman's indictment and trial were perfectly legal. Afghanistan is among a score of Muslim countries that treat apostasy as a crime, and one of eight—along with Iran, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Yemen, Mauritania, and Comoros—that makes it punishable by death.

Afghanistan's laws are based on a post-Taliban constitution, enacted in 2004, that was warmly supported and even guided in its creation by the United States. It defines the country as an Islamic republic and postulates that "no law can be contrary to the sacred religion of Islam." After it was adopted, Zalmay Khalilzad, the American ambassador to Afghanistan at that time, called the document "one of the most enlightened constitutions in the Islamic world."

By October 2005, it was Iraq's turn to adopt a new constitution, and the ubiquitous Mr. Khalilzad was on hand in his new role as the U.S. ambassador in Baghdad. He approved the core principle, that "Islam is a main source for legislation and it is not permitted to legislate anything that conflicts with the fixed principles of the rules of Islam." This prompted a secular Kurdish politician to comment,

> It's shocking. It doesn't fit American values. They have spent so much blood and money here, only to back the creation of an Islamist state . . . I can't believe that's what the Americans really want or what the American people want.

This was the kind of constitution the Iraqi people wanted, however, judging by the fact that they approved it by a margin of four to one. Mr. Khalilzad and his bosses have every right to claim that they have acted—both in Kabul and in Baghdad—in accordance with the wishes of the majority, but their primary task should have been not to pander to the "street" but to ensure that American interests are protected. As I have warned repeatedly in these pages, "democratization" of the greater Middle East would lead to its Islamization. It is not in this country's interest to facilitate the trend, in principle, and then to confront its unpleasant fruits, in practice, but the damage has been done. Both Afghanistan and Iraq have constitutions that offer the basis for the establishment of a full-fledged Allahocracy once the Americans depart.

The attention given to Rahman's case provides a sharp contrast to the general indifference of the West to Christian suffering elsewhere in the Muslim world. The lack of a principled American response when Christians are mistreated by other "key partners" of the United States—Pakistan, Egypt, and even "secular" Turkey—is a moral crime and a political mistake.

In Pakistan, where Christians account for under two percent of the population, they are subjected to endemic discrimination and harassment. Any dispute with a Muslim can become a religious issue if the Christian is accused of blasphemy. The blasphemy law, introduced in 1988, provides for punishment of "anyone who insults the holy name of the Prophet in word, writing or deed or visible representations, direct or indirect insinuations." So far, more than 650 Pakistanis have been prosecuted under this law, and some two-dozen others accused of this offense were killed. A report issued in 2005 by the Conference of Catholic Bishops of Pakistan warned that the law is used by Muslims to settle quarrels. Charges of blasphemy can be made on the flimsiest of evidence, even one man's word against another's—and, since it is invariably a Muslim's word against that of a Christian, the outcome is preordained.

A typical incident occurred last November in the town of Sangla Hill, when Yousuf Masih, a Christian, won a substantial sum of money playing cards with a Muslim neighbor. The sore loser went to the police and accused Masih of setting fire to a copy of the Koran. Local imams used mosque loudspeakers to demand retribution, a mob was duly assembled, three churches were torched, a Catholic convent and a Christian elementary school were vandalized, local Christians had to flee, and the police force stood idly by.

Being accused of blasphemy is only one of many risks faced by the Christian

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

community. Terrorist attacks on churches are common. In October 2001, attackers opened fire on a church at Bahawalpur, in southern Pakistan, killing 16 worshipers. In March 2002, a grenade attack on a church in Islamabad killed five people, including an American woman and her 17-year-old daughter. In December of that year, three girls died during a Christmas Day attack on a small church in Chianwala, in eastern Pakistan. Less lethal attacks are happening more or less every week. Last April, fire was set to two churches in two days: a Protestant church in Mian Channu, east of Multan; and a Catholic church in Jivanpura, west of Lahore. On February 15, during protests against the Danish cartoons, demonstrators ransacked three Christian high schools. On February 18, unidentified men attacked a popular Christian singer, A Nayyar, and forced him to recite a profession of the Islamic faith.

In Egypt, supposedly a friend of the United States and the second-largest recipient of the U.S. taxpayers' largesse, 7 million Christians (in a nation of 70 million people) experience harassment and persecution from both the government and various Islamic groups, such as the Al-Gama'a Al-Islamiya. Islam is Egypt's "state religion," and Islamic schools receive state subsidies. Apostasy is not a crime, but the authorities treat it as such. When Hanaan Assofti, a 26-year-old convert from Islam to Christianity, tried in 1992 to leave and seek asylum in Europe, she was arrested by state security officers at the Cairo airport. In 2003, Egyptian police arrested 22 converts and their helpers. Some were tortured, and one, Isam Abdul Fathr, died in custody. In 2005, Gaseer Mohamed Mahmoud was tortured by police and was told he would be imprisoned until he renounced Christianity. However, conversion from Christianity to Islam is encouraged. The pressure to do so is intense and often accompanied by offers of material reward.

When bribes fail, there is violence. In May 1992, Al-Gama'a Al-Islamiya killed 14 Christians in a series of coordinated attacks. In September 1993, Christians were forced to flee four villages in Upper Egypt and abandon their properties. A series of attacks followed in 1996 and 1997, including the murder of ten Christians at Mary Guirguis Church in the El Minya province. Not a single person was convicted of murder following the January 2000 massacre of 21 Coptic Christians in the village of Al Kosheh, and smaller-scale massacres continue unabated.

The murder last February of Fr. Andrea Santoro in Trabzon, on Turkey's Black Sea coast, was a classic case of jihadism. Such incidents are fairly rare nowadays, however, not because Turkish society has become enlightened and tolerant, but because there are practically no Christians left in the country. In 1955, the Greek minority—already reduced to a tiny remnant of what had been a community of over two million—suffered the worst ethno-religious riot in Europe since *Kristallnacht*. There are but 2,000 Greeks remaining in Turkey today, and, according to a Helsinki Watch mission that visited Turkey in October 1991, they still suffer harassment by police, discrimination, restrictions on religious freedom, limitations on the right to control charitable institutions, and the denial of their ethnic identity.

Elsewhere in the region, the picture is equally grim. Beleaguered Christians are leaving Iraq *en masse*. In Lebanon, their numbers have collapsed, from a simple majority to an estimated 25 percent in two generations. In the Palestinian territories, they have declined from one third of the Arab population a century ago to under two percent today. In his grim 2002 book, *The New Persecuted: Inquiries Into Anti-Christian Intolerance in the New Century of Martyrs*, Antonio Socci provides evidence that an average of 160,000 Christians have been killed every year since 1990, almost all of them by Muslims, in East Timor, Sudan, Mauritania, Nigeria, Indonesia, *etc.* Socci laments the fact that "this global persecution of Christianity is still in progress but in most cases is ignored by the mass media and Christians in the West."

While ignoring this broader backdrop of the Rahman affair, the media in the United States proved all too eager to publish assurances by Islam's assorted apologists that executing apostates was not in accordance with that religion's teaching or its historical practice. M. Cherif Bassiouni, a professor of international law at DePaul University, did not merely claim, as other authors have done, that the Koran does not provide a clear injunction to punish apostasy with death. In the pages of the *Chicago Tribune*, he asserted that "a Muslim's conversion to Christianity is not a crime punishable by death under Islamic law." This statement denied 13 centuries of historical practice and glossed over the fact that death for apostasy is clearly mandated by the *Hadith*, the supposed record of Muhammad's words and deeds that provides an essential source of Islamic jurisprudence.

It may be possible to dispute the Koranic basis of a death penalty for apostasy, but it is not possible to deny that the demand for such punishment is based on incontrovertibly valid Islamic sources, precedents, and methods of deduction. Its advocates invoke sources and principles that are independent of any capricious or dubious interpretations of Islam's source material. These core sources have created a moral philosophy and a legal code that leaves no room for individual judgment based on natural morality or on the allegiance to any other source of authority but itself. Analogies thus derived stand above reason, conscience, and nature. The lack of any pretense to a moral basis for executing apostates is explicit: There is no "spirit of the law" in Islam, no rationality behind it for human reason to discover.

As Clement Huart pointed out 99 years ago,

> Until the newer conceptions, as to what the Koran teaches as to the duty of the believer towards non-believers, have spread further and have more generally leavened the mass of Moslem belief and opinion, it is the older and orthodox standpoint on this question which must be regarded by non-Moslems as representing Mohammedan teaching and as guiding Mohammedan action.

Indeed: Rahman's would-be executioners were not the ones "distorting" Islam; rather, it was those apologists claiming that the death penalty should not or does not apply to his case.

At a personal level, we may sympathize with the desire of supposedly moderate Muslims to be "revisionists" without sliding into apostasy themselves, but the effort is doomed. The willingness of a few to become objectively bad Muslims, because they are willing to reject discriminatory and offensive tenets of historical Islam, may be laudable in human terms, but it will do little to modify Islam as a doctrine. A reformed faith that should question the authority of the Afghan court to execute Abdul Rahman, or attempt by rationalistic selection or abatement to force such a reform, would be Islam no longer. ◈

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LIFE

The Courage to Defy Prudence

by Christopher Check

On February 22, the South Dakota Senate, by a vote of 23-12, approved legislation banning nearly all abortions in the state. On February 24, the vote in the South Dakota House of Representatives was 50-18 (H.B. 1215). Twelve days later, Gov. Mike Rounds signed the measure into law. President Bush criticized the law as too extreme and reminded America of his own inscrutable belief that abortion is OK if the baby was conceived during a rape or an act of incest, but not otherwise. Come July 1, committing an abortion for any reason other than to save the life of the mother will be a crime in South Dakota, punishable by a prison sentence of up to five years.

Or will it? Long before the ink of Rounds' signature had dried, the end runs were under way. One is as sad as it is silly: Cecilia Fire Thunder, who last year defeated actor/activist Russell Means to become president of the Oglala Sioux (the tribe's first female president ever), declared, "I will personally establish a Planned Parenthood clinic on my own land, which is within the boundaries of the Pine Ridge Reservation where the State of South Dakota has absolutely no jurisdiction." Planned Parenthood thanked her but declined her offer—for now, that is. Their better-than-half-a-century record of exterminating the babies of very poor brown people suggests that they might one day be game. Pine Ridge Reservation spans America's two poorest counties, where unemployment exceeds 80 percent and annual *per capita* income hovers around $3,700.

Chieftess Fire Thunder's contribution to the cause is a minor distraction. Pine Ridge Reservation sits about as far as you can go from Sioux Falls and still be in the state. Sioux Falls is where Planned Parenthood, once a week on "clinic day" (sometimes Mondays, sometimes Wednesdays), takes the lives of South Dakota's unborn. What is more, South Dakota Attorney General Larry Long made it clear that an abortuary on an Indian reservation would be limited to Indian women. In 2004, only nine percent of those who procured abortions in South Dakota were Indian women.

The two significant efforts to stop the ban are a proposed statewide referendum on the law in November and, failing that, a challenge in the courts. A referendum could stop the law in its tracks. A court battle would, at least, enjoin it for a few years.

Planned Parenthood should have little difficulty collecting, at two dollars each, the 16,728 signatures needed to put the law to a November referendum. Some pro-lifers are reportedly signing the petition, confident that a referendum will reinforce the ban, but calling the referendum's outcome is not easy. South Dakota does have a long-standing reputation as a state that is hostile to abortion. The last abortionist resident in the state was Buck Williams, who packed up and moved out eight years ago. The four abortionists who currently take turns working Planned Parenthood's Sioux Falls abortuary fly in from Minnesota.

While shame and stigma probably keep abortionists from residing in the state, South Dakota may not be as vigorously pro-life as the vote counts on the law suggest. Brian Burch, vice president of Fidelis, a Catholic legal organization lobbying for and offering counsel to the pro-life side in the current battle, believes that, of the 60 percent of South Dakotans who describe themselves as pro-life, some 10 to 15 percent would make exceptions for rape and incest. Planned Parenthood, in hyping the referendum, will argue that the ban further victimizes rape victims.

Should Planned Parenthood's referendum fail, they will take the battle to the courts. The architects and sponsors of the ban, and Rounds himself, desire just such a confrontation. Indeed, the current ban is not the first South Dakota law designed to provoke a federal lawsuit. Last year, Rounds signed an informed-consent bill, which also passed the South Dakota House and Senate by sweeping margins.

H.B. 1166 declares that "an abortion is not voluntary and informed" unless the abortionist makes clear to the woman that "the abortion will terminate the life of a whole, separate, unique, living human being." The abortionist must explain to the woman that she has "an existing relationship with that unborn human being and that the relationship enjoys protection under the United States Constitution and under the laws of South Dakota" and that, "by having an abortion, her existing relationship and her existing constitutional rights with regards to that relationship will be terminated." Further, the abortionist must be explicit about the risks associated with abortion, including "depression and related psychological distress" and "increased risk of suicide ideation and suicide." The law also requires that he explain the gestational age of the child and its level of development. He must tell the woman that she will risk "infection, hemorrhage, danger to subsequent pregnancies, and infertility." Two hours must pass between the delivery of this counsel and the abortion.

This informed-consent law is tied up in *Planned Parenthood* v. *Rounds, Alpha Center, et al.*, which has been in litigation in South Dakota's U.S. District Court and in the U.S. Court of Appeals, Eighth Circuit, since last year. Some pro-life observers of the case are enthusiastic because, for the first time in a legal battle, the "rights" of abortionists are pitted against those of women. Planned Parenthood maintains that the law infringes on abortionists' free-speech rights, and it is on these questionable grounds that the current injunction against the law has been issued. Whether a judge will ultimately buy that argument is a separate question, but governments at all levels compel doctors to disclose risks and other information all the time. South Dakota, on the other hand, is arguing that the law defends the constitutionally protected relationship between a mother and her unborn child, a relationship the law would recognize and make clear in a case, for example, where she planned to give the baby up for adoption.

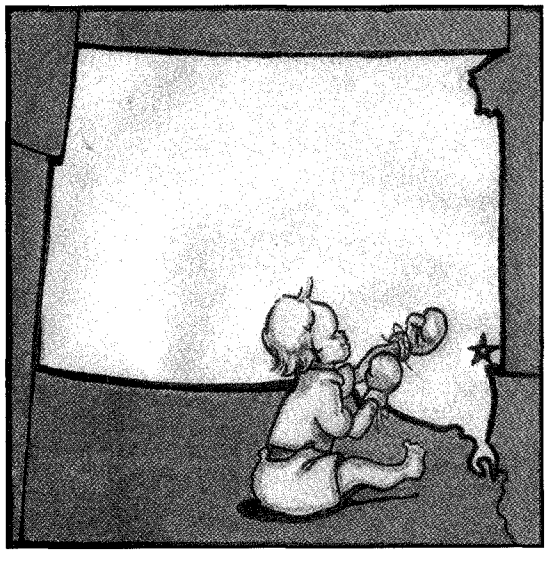
The main part of the case will be heard this fall, but the outcome of *Planned Parenthood* v. *Rounds, Alpha Center, et al.* could influence a ruling in a future Su-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

preme Court battle over South Dakota's ban. Significant, also, in such a case may be the findings of South Dakota's Task Force to Study Abortion. Created by the legislature at the same time the informed-consent bill was passed, the Task Force produced a 71-page report containing some 2,000 affidavits concerning the grave harm of abortion to women. The findings and conclusions of the report are cited in Section 1 of the current ban, which takes pains to identify "scientific advances since the 1973 decision of *Roe v. Wade*" that show that "life begins at the time of conception."

If South Dakota's most recent ban on abortion should make it to the Supreme Court, the informed-consent law (provided it survives its own legal trial) and the report of the Task Force might combine to provide the evidence needed for a ruling in favor of the unborn. Those are a lot of ifs, but Planned Parenthood is not taking any chances. They fear the Task Force report, and well they should, given that it inspired the overwhelming majorities in South Dakota's House and Senate to favor the current ban. They have already begun efforts to discredit it. And one anonymous pro-life donor sees hope: He has put up a million dollars to defend the current ban in court.

The pro-life movement, however, is far from convinced. One close observer described the division in the movement over the South Dakota ban as "tremendous." National pro-life organizations, including Americans United for Life in Chicago, have opined that the South Dakota ban is ill timed. It is not clear that the ban will ever make it to the Supreme Court, they argue, but even if it does, the current composition of the Court is such that there might still be a majority hostile to life. Risking a third decision in favor of abortion (following *Roe* and *Casey*), when an unfavorable decision could derail pro-life efforts for many years, may seem imprudent. Advocates of the South Dakota ban disagree. They saw an opportunity created by years of cultural and legislative progress on behalf of the unborn and seized it.



For 33 years, *prudence* has been the watchword, and the chip-away-at-*Roe* faction has not slowed abortion in this country. It would be refreshing and inspiring to see Governor Rounds set prudence aside and, come July 1, send his National Guard to shut down the Planned Parenthood abortuary in Sioux Falls.

Christopher Check is the executive vice president of The Rockford Institute.

TECHNOLOGY

The Age of Verification

by Marian Kester Coombs

Some millennia after the Earth spun out of nothingness and began hosting life forms, there dawned the Age of Reptiles, which gave way to the Age of Mammals. Then came the Golden Age, the Age of Fable, the Age of Augustus, the Age of Migrations, the Dark and the Middle Ages, the Age of Absolutism and the Age of Reason, the Age of Exploration, the Age of Empire and the Industrial (or Machine) Age, the Age of Innocence and the Age of Anxiety, the Space Age, the Age of Aquarius, and the Information Age.

We are said to be still in the age of technologically enhanced accelerated information access. Information now plays the role that gold played during the Mercantile Age. So why do we hear the black bell toll for newspapers, of all things, in this age where information is the currency of choice—newspapers, whose content is Information itself? Stock quotes and sporting stats (the better to bet with), corporate reports, macro- and microeconomic data, emerging technologies, political developments at all levels of government, texts of speeches and reports, legislative precedents and maneuvers, legal decisions, new wrinkles in crime, profiles of movers and shakers, read-between-the-lines interviews with national and world leaders, backgrounders on issues of the day such as immigration and religious practice, reviews of the latest cultural highs and lows in all media, gossip, advice to the lovelorn, the latest psychological theories, disasters, scandals, medical breakthroughs, health tips, horoscopes, recipes, nightlife and entertainment, fashion trends, how to throw a party, how to decorate, who just died or got married, the weather forecast, satirical cartoons . . .

Ah, they say, folks now get their news from alternative media—hip and edgy websites, *Slate* and *Salon* and *The Onion*, the blogosphere, Comedy Central and MTV. No more need to take in hand an ink-stained broadside plopped onto the porch in the bleak dawn hours by an earnest, pimply paperboy. No more *Sentinels*, *Guardians* and *Beacons*, *Couriers* and *Dispatches*, *Chronicles*, *Criers* and *Clarions*, *Heralds* and *Tribunes*, *Intelligencers*, *Inquirers*, *Informers* and *Examiners*, *Mirrors* and *Voices*, *Stars*, *Suns*, and *Globes*. No more fish wrap, cage liners, paper training, canine fetchables, homemade piñatas and papier mâché; no more yellowed clipping files, rolled-up clouts, or folded printer's caps; no more hiding your unwashed morning face behind an unfurled wall of print.

The traditional daily newspaper is definitely taking a hit in sales-and-circ. The Newspaper Association of America reports that circulation of dailies peaked in 1984 and fell more than 13 percent over the next 20 years, with 2005 showing the steepest annual decline yet. Many papers have shot themselves in the shoe leather by posting their front pages and features online *gratis*; moreover, since advertising dollars are the real source of operating revenue, dozens of free, news-digest-type tabloids have sprung up in metro areas to compete with the dailies. Journalists vacillate between nail-biting job anxiety and contempt for a nation of boob-tube zombies, fact snackers, and willful ignoramuses. Will newspapers die out altogether?

There will always be a market for their content, of course. And real news, no matter what its packaging, will always have to be gathered the same way it has always been gathered—by cultivating sources, conducting investigations, eliciting leaks, following leads, harassing public servants, researching public and pri-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

vate records; asking the right questions and then listening; being able to conceive a story in the first place, how to play it and how to set up the lead, body, and climax; balancing the novelty of the moment with the timelessness of history—and, therefore, real news will always require real journalists to craft it.

Today, the problem is not too little information but too much; a mounting inability to process and assess the endless gushing flow of it; the ruthless truthlessness of so much of it; the tangled webs of dis- and misinformation that hem us in on every side. What is lacking is not information but *verification*. The outfit that can offer information verification on a consistent, disinterested, trustworthy basis will be the next Microsoft, Google, and eBay rolled into one.

Textual authority, like all other forms of authority, is never settled, but the World Wide Web's creation of cyberspace complicates this perennial question in two paradoxical ways: first, by the fragility of huge amounts of information that may be lost in an instant because of a system failure, either by accident or hostile action; and second, by the eternalization of a falsehood, either mistakenly or maliciously introduced, that leaves a mark no amount of corrective action can remove, while the lazy ease of web use gives "revised" (dumbed down, politically corrected, oversimplified, sanitized, sensationalized, incomplete, partisan, or otherwise corrupted) content a free ride along the road to received wisdom.

We are awash in "anecdata." Our Oprahfied discourse has led directly to the rise of Stephen Colbert's neologism *truthiness*, which the American Dialect Society defines as "the quality of preferring concepts or facts one wishes to be true." What you are comfortable with and how you *feel* about something trump the "facts," which are now viewed as a suspect concept, an oppressive invention of linear, thin-lipped males.

Written or stated with enough audacity in any medium, from talk radio to webzines to best-selling books to advertising to the TV Guide Channel, any claim may now pass long enough to survive at least one news cycle; once it has done that, it is Out There and becomes as true, as authoritative, as any other claim in this Age of Skepticism. Both "sides" of the American political system have learned how to hit and run with semitruths. Then, the electorate plays its position in the game, choosing which mutually exclusive alternative reality to believe—*e.g.*, Kerry the war hero, Kerry the coward; Bush the evil moron, Bush the Christian soldier; global warming the threat, global warming the myth; universal healthcare the solution, universal healthcare the destroyer. Even the most venerable newspapers have been caught practicing truthy journalism, found guilty of plagiarism or of making up quotations, interviews, characters, incidents, and entire chains of events.

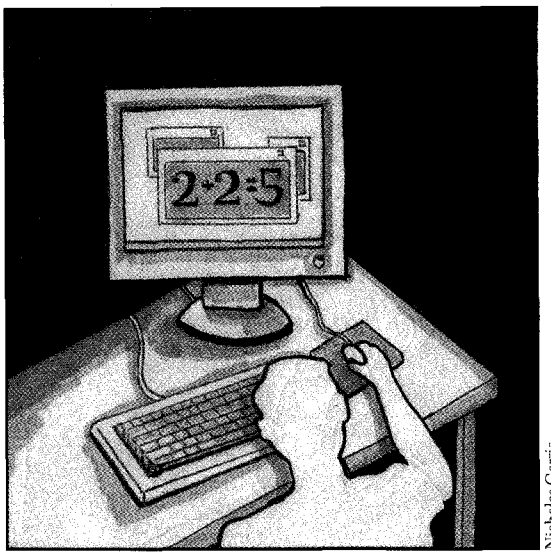
Verification has become a huge problem even in the sciences. For every fraud unmasked—*e.g.*, the Hwang Woo-Suk cloning caper—how many are going undetected? Technical testing has found that, since 2002, at least 25 percent of all manuscripts accepted for publication by the *Journal of Cell Biology* came with illustrations that "were manipulated in ways that violate the journal's guidelines" (*New York Times*, January 24).

"Yet another study upends what Americans thought they knew about diet and health," notes *Science Times* (February 14), referring to a huge federal study that shows "a low-fat diet might not prevent breast cancer, colon cancer or heart disease, after all." The article continues, "But will anyone listen?" Well, we have only been told a thousand times by *scientists* that a low-fat diet prevents breast cancer, colon cancer, and heart disease.

Attempting to fill the verification vacuum, for laymen at least, are such sites as *HoaxBusters.ciac.org*, *TheSmokingGun.com*, *Purportal.com*, *JunkScience.com*, and, of course, *Snopes.com*. It has become commonplace, in response to each irresistibly maudlin or lurid e-mail you pass on, to receive the deflating reply, "I checked with Snopes, and this is false!"

But why are debunking sites any more authoritative than the stories they debunk? Take Snopes: Named for the money-grubbing family of several William Faulkner novels, the site is run by a couple named Barbara and David Mikkelson. Their first FAQ asks, "How do I know the information you've presented is accurate?"

> A: We don't expect anyone to accept us as the ultimate authority on any topic, which is why our site's name indicates that it contains *reference* pages. Unlike the plethora of anonymous individuals who create and send the unsigned, unsourced e-mail messages that are forwarded all over the Internet, we show our work. The research materials we've used in the preparation of any particular page are listed in the bibliography displayed at the bottom of that page so that readers who wish to verify the validity of our information may check those sources for themselves.



Snopes depends heavily on a series of books by academic folklorist Jan Harold Brunvand, professor emeritus of English at the University of Utah. For more than a quarter-century, Brunvand has studied urban legends as "living folklore." His method involves collecting a story and its variants from all over the planet; following the "chains of transmission" back as far as possible to the original sources; cross-referencing the story with the existing store of human mythology, legend, literature, and both folk and official history; and examining how the literal untruth of a legend does not detract from its deeper psychological truth. There are few better examples of rigorous documentation in such a notoriously imprecise field.

Another attempt to validate information is the online Wikipedia (b. 2001, registered in Florida), which bills itself as "the free encyclopedia that anyone can edit." So far, it boasts more than 940,000 entries. *Wiki* is said to be Hawaiian for "quick," as immortalized by Elvis in *Blue Hawaii*. There are wikis all over the web; Aaron Swartz (*aaronsw.com/weblog*) defines a *wiki* as

> a collaboratively-edited website

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

which many people also view as an anarchistic publishing tool. The distinguishing feature of wikis is that they typically allow *all* users to edit *any* page, with full freedom to edit, change and delete the work of previous authors.

Like all anarchist ventures, this one squints through utopian pince-nez: "Each side [will] continue bashing the other side's work until the page [gives] the best arguments from each side, presented in such a way that nobody could object." Nobody could object? In this Age of Polarization? In practice, bad wiki drives out good, and, as in many other areas of life, determined minorities burrow, bore, and march anonymously through the pages, making up for their tiny numbers with a vast egotism and a ravening sense of entitlement.

The anarchistic approach has led to the proliferation of "sock puppets," users who pretend to be numerous other users in order to lace articles with their own biases, and to resort to "vandalism," described by the Wikipedists as "a deliberate attempt to compromise the integrity of the encyclopedia." Integrity? The site's disclaimer states, in boldface, "**Wikipedia Makes No Guarantee of Validity**." It promises "no formal peer review" and plenty of "not professional advice."

Wikipedia further claims "no responsibility for inaccurate or libelous information" and that "inappropriate changes are usually removed quickly." Not quickly enough. In one recent case documented by Jay Ambrose, the journalist John Seigenthaler was implicated in the Kennedy assassinations by a contributor to Wikipedia, which led to the usual siege of hateful blogs whose poison is impossible to purge once spewed into cyberspace.

Erasures, pranks, and obscene inserts, however, are not so much the problem as the piling on of p.c. opinion disguised as information. Most Wikipedia articles on subjects with any political content read as though they were peer-reviewed by Al Franken.

The encyclopedists of the Enlightenment understood that they needed to redefine man and society if they were to undermine the verities of the Catholic Church. George Orwell fictionalized communism's efforts to revise the hearts and minds of its subjects in *1984*. But how clumsy and time-consuming the memory hole and newspeak seem, compared to the chance to rewrite all of human knowledge from scratch on the internet!

In this light, Google's willingness to toe the party line in China is a telling and ominous development. So much for the "objective mathematical formula" Google uses to weight sites. If the world's richest search engine—at $80 billion in market capitalization, worth more than all newspapers combined—can accommodate the urge of the Chinese state to control the present by controlling the past, what other acts of "voluntary self-censorship" might it find (or has it already found) compatible with its motto "Don't Be Evil"?

But no matter. In the end, viruses may take care of the problem of too much information. To paraphrase Stalin, "No information, no problem." As soon as the redraft of human history is completed, the internet may well be "punk'd" once too often, and all will vanish in a puff of glittering dust, spun back into nothingness once more.

Marian Kester Coombs writes from Crofton, Maryland.

The Rockford Institute

presents

The History and Literature of the Ancient World

Last year's TRI Academy course has been revised and expanded. "History and Literature of the Ancient World," taught by Dr. Thomas Fleming, is now complete and available in a format conducive to home education. Dr. Fleming holds a Ph.D. in classics from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, and is regarded as a leading authority on ancient Greek lyric poetry.

Dr. Fleming provides a survey of Egypt and Mesopotamia before embarking on an in-depth examination of the history and literature of Greece and Rome. Readings include works of Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenephon, Plutarch, Livy, and Tacitus, among others. The civilization of Europe and the United States is a legacy of ancient Greece and Rome, and the study of the history and literature of these great civilizations is the foundation of any serious education.

Students will receive a set of 33 lectures (audiotape or CD) and an accompanying study guide.

Present course owners may purchase an upgrade (the 6 new/revised lectures and a revised study guide) for only $20.00. Sign up now.

The Rockford Institute

928 North Main Street
Rockford, Illinois 61103

- send check or money order to 928 N. Main Street, Rockford, IL 61103
- call (800) 383-0680 to order with MasterCard, Visa, Amex, Discover
- purchase online at the webstore on *ChroniclesMagazine.org*

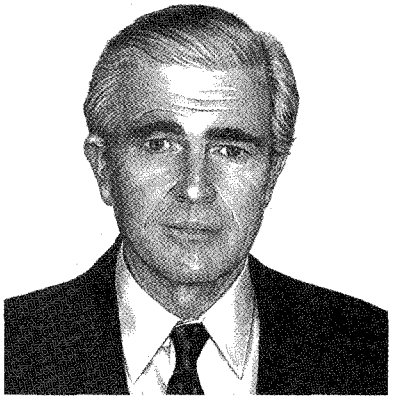
Price

$400.00 for whole year

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

by George McCartney

Word Power



V for Vendetta
Produced and distributed by Warner Bros.
Directed by James McTeigue
Screenplay by Andy and Larry Wachowski

Thank You for Smoking
Produced by Room Nine Entertainment and ContentFilm
Written and directed by Jason Reitman from the novel by Chistopher Buckley
Distributed by Fox Searchlight Pictures

"Words will always retain their power." So says the mysterious and much-abused V (Hugo Weaving), the masked vigilante *cum* political terrorist who swashes about in *V for Vendetta*, first-time director James McTeigue's adaptation of Alan Moore's would-be subversive comic strip. So take heed, all you high-schoolers. This latest avatar of action antics believes in word power. He is perfectly at home introducing himself to a startled young lady as

> a humble vaudevillian veteran, cast vicariously as both victim and villain by the vicissitudes of Fate. This visage [he means his oversized-grin mask], no mere veneer of vanity, is a vestige of the *vox populi*, now vacant, vanished; a vital voice once venerated, now vilified. . . . Yet verily, this vichyssoise of verbiage veers most verbose, so let me simply add that it is in my very great honor to meet you.

Whew! That's enough to get you through three SATs, at least in the V for vocabulary category. As for grammar and syntax, I would not bet on its example unless you want to tumble into the fourth quartile.

And this is the film's problem. It is all bombast and little sense. As such, it will appeal to a certain narrow segment of the youthful population along with many who are not so youthful, to judge by the preponderance of rapturous reviews from supposedly responsible film critics. *Vendetta* appeals to those who long for sophistication and mistake big words for its trademark. This is troubling. For, within this group, a percentage (one hopes tiny) may find the film's romanticized violence a spur to action.

Taking his cue from Guy Fawkes, the Catholic rebel who attempted to blow up England's Protestant parliament in 1605, V dresses in 17th-century garb and affects a dandyish verbal wit. (Why he sports a Cavalier's long hair under a Puritan's high conical straight-brimmed coptain, however, is more than I can figure out.) V is a man on a mission. He wants to blow up buildings, institutions, heads of state. Going well beyond Fawkes' modest goal, V does not want to restore the true religion to Great Britain (he rather dislikes churches) but to institute universal anarchy. He believes fully liberated people will rule themselves spontaneously. Right from the Fawkes playbook.

The original comic book written by Moore and produced in serial installments from 1981 to 1988 was a protracted tirade attacking Margaret Thatcher's conservative government. Like other liberals of the time, Moore was sure the Iron Lady was turning England into a fascist state. After all, she wanted to stop the dole and put layabouts to work. Members of her government had expressed concern about the influx of Muslims and Asians into the country. What's more, her health officials even broached the possibility of quarantining AIDS patients. (An opportunity missed, as it turned out. How many tens of thousands might it have saved? Or is it fascist to raise this question?) So Moore created a dystopian state in the near future, 1997, in which the government has taken steps to eliminate foreigners and homosexuals and to spy on the rest of the population. The film updates this a bit. It is now 2020, and the government has armed itself with a weapons-grade virus, which it has turned on its own populace. Government officials reason that a scared citizenry is an obedient one. And it has worked. The Brits we see in the story's background spend all their time in pubs sipping Watneys and watching the bar-side telly, visibly content to be under the fascist heel.

It is *1984 déjà vu*—this time, however, with none of the wit nor the bite of Orwell's nightmare. The film is content to show us John Hurt as the Leader, a head of state who alternately barks commands and threatens his staff from a theater-sized television screen. He demands they capture V, the one genuine rebel left in all England. Hurt is a good actor, but he is given only stock rodomontade to mouth here. Besides, who can take him seriously after having seen him play Winston Smith so affectingly 22 years ago? V, meanwhile, goes about his business. He blows up Old Bailey to the accompaniment of Tchaikovsky's *Overture to the War of 1812*, having somehow arranged for it to be played on the lamplight speakers that are now part of London's two-way public electronic-surveillance and communications system. Despite having nearly been burned to a cinder some years before while escaping internment in a government-run genetic-engineering lab, he handily dispatches well-armed government agents whenever they show up. It only takes a couple of short swords and a repertoire of whirling karate. (The film was produced by the Wachowski brothers of *Matrix* fame, as evident in its ungainly marriage of grand action choreography and stale, munchkin-sized ideas.) He even has time to save Evey, a puzzled-looking Natalie Portman playing a 17-year-old orphan. Coming upon her just as she is about to be raped by state curfew enforcers, he kills her assailants, then takes her back to his basement lair. There, he chastely falls in love with the waif as he educates her in the ways of higher terrorism. This includes his plan to make good on Guy Fawkes' abortive assault. He has prepared an underground trainload of chemical fertilizer to blow up both houses of Parliament, along with Big Ben. As he informs Evey,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Blowing up buildings can change the world." Right. Just consider how much better off we are for having been blown up on September 11 and then blowing up Baghdad in turn. Nothing like explosives to clear the air.

Vendetta was supposed to open on Guy Fawkes' Day (November 5), when Brits set off fireworks and their children sell paper effigies of Fawkes—"A penny for the old Guy"—to be burned to everyone's delighted edification. But Warner Brothers got cold feet after the London Underground bombings set off by Muslim terrorists last July and decided to delay the release—not long enough, by my clock. This is, after all, a narrative that attacks its fictional government for, among other things, having deported its resident Muslims. Audience members might get confused and mistake such a policy for statesmanlike foresight, thus undermining the film's boldly antifascist message.

Vendetta trumpets its devotion to the power of language and ideas. At one point, V claims he cannot be killed because behind his mask is not a man but an idea. What is the idea? I'm not sure, really. Something about the world of do-what-you-will total freedom, a boy's own fondest wish. But put that aside. *Vendetta* is really devoted to the blow-'em-up-big school of filmmaking. I am giving nothing away in mentioning that V succeeds in exploding Parliament. The Fawkesian fireworks have been playing incessantly in the television promos for the film. It is another special-effects marvel meant to be a climactic cleansing of all the bothersome rules and regulations of social life. But what it really does is explode the film's pretension to be taken seriously.

Thank You for Smoking also blazons its love of language, but with considerably more justice than *V* displays. It also outdoes *V* in the Orwellian sweepstakes.

Smoking is a clever, knowing tribute to word merchants, those hacks who toil tirelessly in the cause of shaping public opinion at the behest of their various corporate masters. In this quest, they do not blink at twisting words until they say the opposite of what they are commonly supposed to mean. A p.r. flak for the alcohol industry proudly sits on the Moderation Council; a gun lobbyist speaks confidently of keeping the peace. Then we have Nick Naylor (Aaron Eckhart, whose smile has never been more charmingly feral). He fervently asserts that those helplessly addicted to nicotine are merely exercising their constitutional freedom of choice whenever they light up. Nick, who flaks for The Academy of Tobacco Studies, a.k.a The Tobacco Institute, explains it all to his ten-year-old son: "If you argue correctly, you're never wrong."

Argument is Nick's game, and, like any other accomplished athlete, he plays not only for his ample paycheck but for the adrenalin high of the contest. No engagement is too inconsequential for his talents. Visiting his son's fifth-grade class to talk about his "profession," he's revving on just as many cylinders as he fires when appearing on national television. Waiting in the hallway to address the kids, he meets a fireman dad on the same uplift mission. This rugged individual carries the tools of his trade, including a first-aid oxygen tank and mask. Nick is unfazed, even though he carries nothing but his kamikaze arsenal of superheated gab designed to pump something far less life-supporting into unwary lungs. Introduced by his son's teacher, he glibly announces that he conducts public relations for tobacco. A girl in the third row protests, "My mother says smoking is bad for you." Nick's smile widens measurably. He relishes this innocent challenge. "Is your mommy a doctor?" he asks sweetly. When the little girl shakes her head no, he points out reasonably enough that, this being so, she could hardly qualify as an expert. He then launches into a lecture on the need to be wary of unfounded assertions. He tells the children that they will be told many things throughout their lives, and it is important not to accept everything uncritically. They should not mistake unfounded opinions for immutable truths. "You need to make up your own minds for yourselves," he counsels them sagely, to the teacher's growing dismay. The kids sit in their desks, looking up at him open-mouthed, clearly dazzled by his verbal legerdemain. Only his son takes exception, muttering to himself, "Please, don't ruin my childhood."

Director Jason Reitman, son of Ivan, includes many such scenes, and it would be ignoble of me to deprive you of their impact by retailing them here. Instead, I shall briefly touch on the provenance and circumstance of this amusing, if overly filtered, satire.

The film is an adaptation of the 1994 novel of the same title by Christopher Buckley, son of William F., and it suffers—seriously at moments—from being 12 years late. As in the novel, Nick is always coming up with superbly cynical initiatives, but now they are jarringly passé. Taking fire from antismoking crusaders, he recommends the Academy fund an antismoking campaign of its own, directed at children, "our most important resource." The *double entendre* is precious. Kids, of course, are smoking's first responders. Further, Nick knows that they will ignore public-service messages when enticed by his other plan. He intends to pay Hollywood producers to have big-name stars smoke on screen. In 1994, such shenanigans weren't exactly new, but the general public was far less aware of them. Today, in the wake of so many successful suits waged against Big Tobacco, we have Philip Morris covering its future assets with ads solemnly warning us about the perils of smoking. Furthermore, along with its stock-market coverage, *Time* routinely reports which actors got what amounts to light up while rocketing to the next galactic frontier in the latest space extravaganzas. On the other hand, Reitman unaccountably leaves out some of Buckley's more inspired moments. My favorite is Nick's deft feint when the FDA demands a skull and crossbones be put on every cigarette package. Nick advises manufacturers that they can turn this lemon into lemonade by embracing the illustration and making it a product logo. Why not a brand of smokes labeled "Death"? Its appeal to histrionic risk takers, better known as adolescents, would be irresistible.

There is much to like about *Smoking*. As did the novel, it satirizes the tobacco industry, its hired flaks, and the antismoking zealots in roughly equal measures. I particularly enjoyed William Macy as the virtuous Vermont senator trying to further his career by noisily trampling on tobacco. He is so solemnly self-important that you can hardly wait for Nick to give him a word-power lesson. Then there is the leathery Sam Elliot as the former Marlboro Man, the one-time cowpoke whose lungs have turned to Swiss cheese, thanks to all the remunerative puffing he indulged in on the range. Elliott's phlegm-clogged growl has rarely been put to better use.

In the end, however, Reitman makes the mistake Buckley did. He goes softly sentimental in trying to make Nick a nice guy. This material requires the satiric skills of a Preston Sturges or a Billy Wilder, directors who would never have let any of the guilty—or innocent, for that matter—off the hook. Still, *Smoking* is pungent enough to light your fire. ©

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

by Chilton Williamson, Jr.

The News

A.D. Sertillanges' advice to anyone who wishes to accomplish intellectual work includes the following admonition:

> As to newspapers, defend yourself against them with the energy that the continuity and the indiscretion of their assault make indispensable. You must know what the papers contain, but they contain so little; and it would be easy to learn it all without settling down to interminable lazy sittings! . . .
>
> A serious worker should be content . . . with the weekly or bimonthly chronicle in a review; and for the rest, with keeping his ears open, and turning to the daily papers only when a remarkable article or a grave event is brought to his notice.

Sertillanges' wonderful book, *The Intellectual Life*, was first published in 1920. Since then, the popular press has grown ever more vulgar and stupid, radio has matured to become an almost inescapable scourge, and television has more than equaled radio in obnoxiousness and nearly matched it in ubiquity. And now there is the internet and the personal computer, which stand in relationship to one another somewhat as the international drug cartels do to the hypodermic needle and syringe. Interminable lazy sittings, indeed! Abandoned to such diversions, the mind soon becomes as *gluteus* as the *maximus* at the opposite end.

You may learn from the newspapers that such-and-such a percentage of the American public reads their print or electronic editions, or watches the network news programs on TV, or spends *x* number of hours surfing the internet or playing video games online. Nobody I know plays video games, and I lack the faintest notion how much attention friends, colleagues, and acquaintances devote to the daily papers. From the large number of daily news-related e-mail messages forwarded to me, I have a considerably better estimate of the time they spend reading the internet news and ferreting out piquant morsels from abstruse websites. It's none of my business, of course, and I'm quite certain nobody cares what I think about it, one way or another. Nevertheless, the amount of invested time and attention suggested by this blizzard of fact, information, and commentary strikes me as excessive—and overly excessive. Aaron D. Wolf has recently described in these pages the broad and pervasive evil he terms "eSlavery." I have in mind something much narrower—at least, it seems restricted to a much narrower category of people—that is probably not an "evil" at all in the moral or theological sense but a dangerous temptation nevertheless, pernicious to the individual intellect and to civilization, alike.

So far as it *is* evil, that is mostly because of the addictive aspect that any overindulgence entails. Otherwise, it is no more evil than the philistinism it represents. Yet philistinism itself is a reflected evil of the modern positivist project, the lust for power realized in control—control exercised to determine the future by redirecting history toward a desired end. The obsession modern intellectuals have with the news reflects their obsession with shaping (or, rather, reshaping) the world to the form they wish it to assume. In this sense, the left has prevailed over the right, by forcing it to concede the primacy of the material in relation to the spiritual, the public to the private, action to reflection, politics to intellect and to the arts, culture (as John Lukacs understands the word) to civilization. The ultimate aim of leftists historically has been to vaporize civilization, after reconstructing the state in the form of an impervious superbunker. Today, American "conservatives" seem prepared to cede civilization (what everyone nowadays calls "culture") by default to the left, in exchange for realizing an agenda that includes corporatism (state capitalism), "free" trade, a globalized economy, political and military hegemony overseas, and progressive caesarism and governmental restraint at home. Once these incalculable benefits have been secured, who needs civilization?

Thus, conservatives, who are wont to deplore bitterly the takeover of American civilization by the left, are themselves substantially to blame for the disaster. As Paul Gottfried has noted, until a generation or so ago, it was traditionalist conservatives who sought to conserve "culture" in America, by explicating it and making fresh contributions to it themselves. But traditional conservatives have been relatively few in number for more generations than that, while moderate, "pragmatic" conservatives of the kind that carry the GOP brand on their fatted hips were (as they continue to be) notorious philistines sailing under Calvin Coolidge's defiant motto, "The Business of America Is Business." The American rich have never understood that generous bequests to institutions such as the Metropolitan Opera and the Whitney Museum are sufficient neither to preserve nor to advance the civilization of their country. What is necessary is that civilized conservatives should not only subsidize American arts and letters but contribute directly to these things by undertaking serious literature and art themselves. Instead, such people have largely assumed the part, in respect of the arts and of learning, of the rich young man in the parable of Christ who declined to give his fortune away to the poor and devote his life to the pursuit of Truth. The result is that the great cultural institutions funded by wealthy conservatives have been commandeered by leftist pirates, and contemporary culture is almost exclusively the creation of cultural subversives. Now that it has become so—thanks, in no small part, to the self-dedication of philistine conservatives to money making and the pursuit of the good life—the current generation of activist conservatives, perceiving a cultural crisis, has responded by treating highbrow culture as an expendable luxury for which serious people have no time. *The left is upon us! America stands besieged! We're in an international culture war! First things first! It's the economy, stupid! Make way for Democratic Capitalism! Look to national security! God save our President! Power to the executive branch! Take back the Supreme*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Court! Organization! Political-action committees! Fundraising dinners! Think tanks! More lobbyists to Capitol Hill! Support The Movement! Remember the Maine—*Nuke Iran!* It is no wonder that the American novel—which, as late as the 1950's, when Hemingway and Faulkner were still alive and at work, was our culture's signature art form—is today a tendentious, ideological, feminized, tedious, trivial, pornographic mess. As every publishing-house editor will tell you, American males do not read fiction anymore. Still less, in all likelihood, do American *conservative* males buy and read novels—much less write them. Anyone curious to know how we came to lose literature will find much of the answer here.

It is not movement conservatives only who have abandoned the library, the museum, the concert hall, the now overhauled and fully computerized study, and life itself for a half-life spent hunched over the keyboard, blogging and cutting-and-pasting-and-forwarding away. Racialist conservatives, anti-immigration conservatives, antiwar conservatives, and free-trade conservatives all seem committed to the same paltry, impoverished existence. For what purpose? Well (they would say), saving the white race (whatever that may be), preserving our national identity, halting imperialism and reinstating the Old Republic, establishing the economic structure of an endless and uninterrupted prosperity, *etc.* But what is the point of accomplishing these things if the vital civilization that subsumes them all is to be placed in cold suspension—meaning, in practical terms, destroyed—for so long as it takes to fulfill the conservative agenda?

Fortunately, the news in which both the shilling, optimistic (movement) conservatives and the dissenting, pessimistic ones have chosen to immerse themselves fails to present the world as it really and truly is. What we get from it instead is rather like a road atlas where networks of red and black lines are laid upon a blank, white background. I am no longer able to count the number of times I've traveled to some part of this country, or of the world, having formed a picture of it from some dismal journalistic account, only to find that the reality bore no resemblance to the presented—and received—impression. The experience was exactly similar to forming an idea of the topography and vegetation of one of those blank regions on the road map and having to come to terms with the reality later encountered by driving across it.

Wise and mature people know that the world can never begin to approximate their personal and preferred vision for it. They will understand, too, that, while free will is not an illusion, it is a reality that becomes increasingly attenuated the further one rises from the individual level to that of the collective, and finally the historical, one. The force of destiny is real and not to be slowed, arrested, and deflected by the human will to the degree that the life of a single man or woman may be self-controlled. In this sense, much of what happens in history *is* inevitable. What goes for separate nations, therefore, goes the more for the world as a whole. It is easy and natural for those Americans who perceive a disastrous future for their country to perceive the United States as being uniquely threatened by contemporary dangers. Immigrant invasion, overpopulation, cultural destruction, secularization and moral rot, terrorism from abroad, plagues, epidemics, environmental destruction, exhaustion of natural resources, extinction of species, global warming—these things menace every other portion of the globe, often much more severely than they do our own. The appropriate response to this collective threat to the life of the world is surely not to withdraw from that real life into a sour, crabbed, bitter, obsessive shadow world of abstraction—which is precisely what this phantasm we call the news is—but to embrace it more fully, more fervently, more *directly*.

As Père Sertillanges insists, we do not encounter the world in books, far less the internet. "You therefore who intend to devote your life to the vocation of study, beware of turning your back for its sake on the rest of life. Give up nothing of what belongs to man." Again: "Intemperance is a sin because it destroys us; and we have the obligation to use life wisely because we have the obligation to live." Reading these sentences, I was reminded of a college classmate who devoted all his free time, when not doing course work, to reading the newspapers and watching news programs on television. The *New York Times*, the *Daily News*, the *New York Post* (all editions), the *Village Voice*, the *Columbia Spectator*, *Time* and *Newsweek*, the *Economist*—if he ever read a book that was not required for some class, I never caught him at it. No sports, no trips into the country, no music (excepting the Rolling Stones, The Monkees, and The Supremes in the background as a counterpoint to printed accounts of the nefarious diplomacy of Henry Kissinger and the Jacobin journalism of Jimmy Breslin), no girlfriend, but the fellow sat up every night until the wee hours of the morning to digest all this pulp matter with the aid of a quart or two of Schlitz beer. He didn't contemplate a career in the Fourth Estate, either. God alone knows what happened to the poor man. Most likely, he became a conservative and moved from Morningside Heights to Washington, D.C., so as to immerse himself in abstraction nearer to its source.

Politics presupposes civilization, not *vice versa*. What America, in particular, and the West (and the world) require today are the courage and resolution to maintain the old civilization to the end—no matter *what* the end. In this endeavor, political action has, indeed, a part to play, but hardly the central part. Politics is a temptation owing to the direct nature of the activity, yet it is a temptation, more often than not, to be resisted. The Church has always taught that the vast majority of sincere Christians are called to remain where and as God found them when they first received the Faith and, in doing so, to fulfill the purpose for which they were created. Somewhat of the same is true of civilized man in his secular aspect. Long views, distant goals, patience, and indirection are finally the salvation of the world, not shortsightedness, busyness, impatience, and direct action. Conservatism is a philosophy of being, not of action, because being is paramount in conserving anything, whereas acting is only secondary. (Often, indeed, action for the purpose of conservation ends in renovation, produced by the uncontrollable energy expended in the effort.) Whoever wishes to defend and preserve our disintegrating civilization ought to minimize his time spent with the news and devote the hours saved to reading poetry and literature; listening to the great composers and studying works of great art; filling his house with the finest furniture, china, silverware, and crystal he can afford; giving elegant dinners for his friends and other like-minded acquaintances—in short, refining himself as a work of high civilization and establishing his household as civilization in miniature.

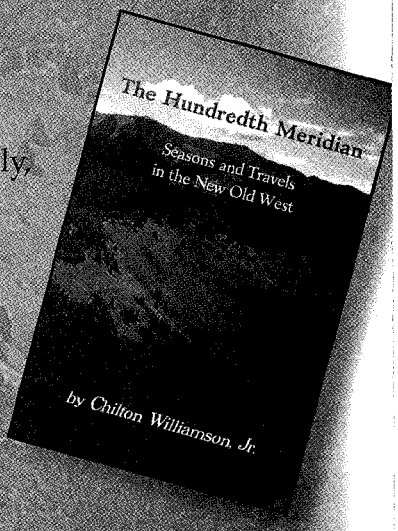
Better yet, he should set aside the propaganda, half-truths, and outright lies of which most of the news consists and turn his hand to painting a picture, composing a string quartet, writing a novel, and doing it without thought of fame, fortune, or influence. Good and honest work, like civilization itself, is its own reward, with effects that radiate, like an act of charity, infinitely throughout the universe. ◈

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Hundredth Meridian

by Chilton Williamson, Jr.

Seasons and Travels in the New Old West



What the Old West had that the New West increasingly lacks are, finally, reality and dignity—the reality of what is basic to human experience, the dignity that comes from acceptance of the physical trials, dangers, hardships, and experience which accompany that reality.

—From the Foreword

Praise for earlier work by Chilton Williamson, Jr.:

"Williamson proves himself a stylish writer with a deft touch in creating three-dimensional characters, and in bringing the bleak beauty of the Wyoming outback to vivid life."—Don Campbell, *Los Angeles Times*

"A novel of wit, intelligence, and high style, enriched with many fresh observations of the eroding American West."—Edward Abbey on *Desert Light*.

The Hundredth Meridian Order Form (please allow 4-6 weeks for delivery)

Softcover Price $22.95
($19.95 + $3.00 shipping and handling each)

X Quantity _____

Total _____

Please mail form (with payment) to:
Chronicles/Products
P.O. Box 800, Mount Morris, IL 61054

or, to order toll-free,
call 1-800-397-8160

HUND

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

☐ Check or money order enclosed

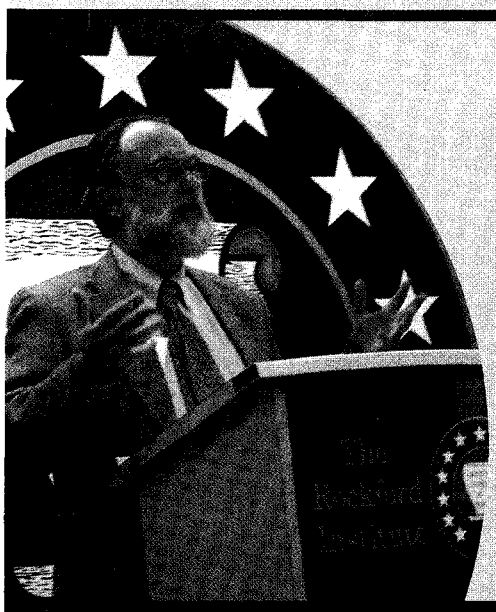
☐ Please bill my: ☐ MasterCard ☐ Visa ☐ Amex ☐ Discover

Card # _____ Exp. Date _____

Signature _____

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

HE ROCKFORD INSTITUTE'S NINTH ANNUAL SUMMER SCHOOL



July 11-16, 2006
Rockford, Illinois

Open to Students of All Ages!

Join *Chronicles* editors **Thomas Fleming**, **Scott P. Richert**, and **Aaron D. Wolf**, along with special guests

Dr. Thomas Landess
Professor of literature and academic dean emeritus, University of Dallas

Dr. James Patrick
Chancellor of the College of Saint Thomas More in Fort Worth

Ian Boyd, C.S.B.
Editor, the *Chesterton Review*

"The American Agrarian Tradition: From Thomas Jefferson to Wendell Berry"

To many, the word *agrarian* conjures up a vision of nostalgic Southern poets lamenting the good old days down on the old plantation. In fact, the agrarian tradition has little to do with nostalgia and much to do with the cold hard facts of political and economic life. At the very heart of every republic stands the farmer who owns his land and defends his liberty in time of war. John Adams and Thomas Jefferson were both agrarians in the true sense, and so were such ancient writers as Hesiod, Cato, and Vergil.

Readings Thomas Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia*; John Taylor's *Arator*; Vergil's *Georgics* and *First Eclogue*; Hesiod's *Works and Days*; Fr. Vincent McNabb's *The Church and the Land*; Hilaire Belloc's *The Servile State*; G.K. Chesterton's *The Outline of Sanity* and *What's Wrong With the World*; *I'll Take My Stand*; *Who Owns America?*; *Flee to the Fields: The Founding Papers of the Catholic Land Movement*

Please call (800) 383-0680 to enroll in THE ROCKFORD INSTITUTE'S Ninth Annual Summer School

egistration is limited and is on a first-come, first-erve basis. Beautiful riverfront accommodations at ockford's premier hotel: Cliffbreakers River Suites lotel (*www.cliffbreakers.com*)

or more information, or to inquire about cholarships, contact Christopher Check t (815) 964-5811 or visit our website, ww.chroniclesmagazine.org.

Full Registration
(Includes all lectures and events, five nights' lodging with breakfast, daily dinner)
Double Occupancy—$695.00 ◆ Single Occupancy—$795.00

Commuter Registration
Lectures Only—$325.00 ◆ Plus Dinner—$425.00

Returning students may deduct $25.00.
Scholarships are available for undergraduate and graduate students.
Prices are per student and do not include books on the reading list.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED